

Fall 2005

Commonthought (Fall 2005)

Commonthought Staff

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/commonthought>



Part of the [Illustration Commons](#), [Painting Commons](#), [Photography Commons](#), [Poetry Commons](#), and the [Printmaking Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Commonthought Staff, "Commonthought (Fall 2005)" (2005). *Commonthought*. 27.
<https://digitalcommons.lesley.edu/commonthought/27>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Lesley University Student Publications at DigitalCommons@Lesley. It has been accepted for inclusion in Commonthought by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Lesley. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@lesley.edu.

Commonthought

Fall 2005

The Magazine of the Arts at Lesley University





Commonthought
Fall 2005

The Magazine of the Arts at Lesley University



Commonthought

Fall 2005

The Magazine of the Arts at Lesley University
Volume 16

Editorial Board

Tootsie Ann
Alex Cairo
Mindy Franklin
Grace Barber Gale
Charlotte Goodwin
Beverly Honeysuckle
Cocoa Marie
Barrett Rippe
Shaynna Rochelle
Ginger Ruth
Brecher Waverly
Jasmine Wayside

Faculty Advisor

Anne Elezabeth Pluto, Ph.D.

Graphics and Design

Ashley Tripp, layout
Elisabeth Steinfeld, cover illustration

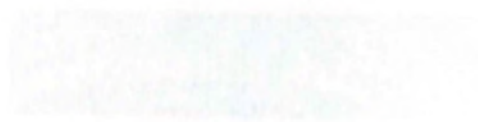


A Quick Word From The Editorial Board

This year's common thoughts were found:

in a martini glass
in red lipstick and red earrings
in the lump in your throat
in bittersweet coriander
and
the breasts of the cook
in a misplaced pack of Marlboro Reds
and the flavor of a paintbrush or
the fertile pen hidden in your hair
then with the frailty of a wild mushroom
and somewhere inbetween its mind altering
purposes, we take our broken pieces and
we put pen to paper
lens to eye
and go.
For whatever reason these common thoughts
brought us here
to turn the page...

Charolotte Goodwin
and the Night Club Girls
and our Annie



1890

1890

1890

1890

1890

1890

1890

Table Of Contents

Poetry

1	Crease The Skies	Ashley Tripp
2	Hapless Trio	Ashley Tripp
4	The Leap	Alison Mitchell
19	A Chance, Perhaps	David Morimoto
22	Intertwined	Jen Dubis
24	Mea Culpa	Crystal-Grace Skeeters
27	Stumbling	Amy-Nicole DuFault
28	Nicole	Amy-Nicole DuFault
29	I/II Untitled	Rachel Alschuler
30	Theories	Deborah Fleur Milstein
31	Barely	Deborah Fleur Milstein
51	Below The Waterline	Lis Steinfeld
53	War	Ashley Tripp
55	Hole	Carly Israel
58	Simon The Painter	Marc Morin
60	Child	Marc Morin
77	Requiem	Anne Elezabeth Pluto

Prose

- | | | |
|----|---|----------------------------|
| 7 | Phoenix Falling | <i>Aurora Sunguroff</i> |
| 15 | My Father's Drum | <i>India Warner</i> |
| 32 | Sanguine | <i>Elisabeth Steinfeld</i> |
| 34 | Marge | <i>Natalia Santiago</i> |
| 40 | Woman With Red Earrings
<i>Lauren Donahue</i> | |
| 43 | Bittersweet Amaretto | <i>Diane Huseby</i> |
| 61 | My Armenian Uncle
<i>Bernadette A. Stockwell</i> | |
| 68 | Washes | <i>Sandy Barresi</i> |
| 74 | Happy Home | <i>Danielle Napier</i> |

Art

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 14 | Boob Job | <i>Elisabeth Steinfeld</i> |
| 21 | Watch Your Step | <i>Amy-Nicole DuFault</i> |
| 50 | Martini | <i>Elisabth Steinfeld</i> |
| 54 | Fourth of July | <i>Beverly Honeysuckle</i> |
| 59 | Untitled | <i>Jen Dubis</i> |
| 78 | Vazkodona | <i>Jen Lacroix</i> |

Crease The Skies

Crease the skies,
and pages of fairy tale books.
Play make-believe with my fragile emotions.
Dress me like a doll
and brush my long hair
or twist it into perfect braids.
Appreciate my painted-on smile
and delicate fingertips.
I'll live in my elaborate doll house,
dressed to the nine's,
posing in front of a vanity
with pink satin cascading to all sides.
How different a fantasy is from reality.
There are no gilded carriages
or dapper princes in white tails
awaiting their Sleeping Beauties and Cinderellas.
There are no decadent flowered walls
and towering castles hovering overhead.
Only those made of sand
that are raped of their splendor
by the cool evening breezes.
Blushing roses and boxes of sweets
have no relevance in romance.
The little girls who dreamed of a fantasy
now live in their melancholy reality.

~Ashley Tripp

Hapless Trio

Today was a good day.

She'd stare at the virgin in the mirror,
whisking her hair from
her pale complexion.
She would walk down the street
bearing the ladylike demeanor
she hoped to have,
swinging her bejeweled fingers
nonchalantly over her head
like a swaggering crystal chandelier,
heels tapping the ground
with an effortless appeal,
shiny, straightened strands
tagging behind her.

Today was a good day.

She'd stare at the autobiography
in the mirror,
smearing red lipstick on her pout,
ringing her orbs with black liner,
streaking rouge on chiseled cheeks
with hands cracked and chaffed.
She was a bit like a little girl,
playing dress-up in her mother's
furs and pearls and burnished gold,
winking at her reflection
with a tube of Love that Pink
Revlon lipstick

before jumping from
back seat
to bedroom
to boudoir,
wiping away tears before
tiny black rivers of mascara could
disrupt her porcelain complexion.

Today was a good day.

She'd stare at the whore in the mirror,
Her amber eyes were host to red veins and intruding
coats of eyeliner,
lipstick kissed off, and porcelain skin
now marred by a ruddy sheen,
departing from one's peach lips
for another's strong hand.
She tugs at a ringle
from under her lapis blue hat.
Her half-closed eyes don't meet
her current partner's, instead
finding comfort fixated on the ground.

~Ashley Tripp

The Leap

The leap from desperate to pathetic
was a short but steep one
and I made it without even knowing,
with 2 skinned knees
and a head and heart decidedly numb
to your angry words,
even number
to the span of your silences
which began where your angry words
ended and cut deeper
than they ever could.
Pathetic is a harsh term,
cut from coarser material,
but it is one that fits all too well lately;
I seem to have grown into it
without even knowing.
Unconscious dissension
is a recurring theme in this tale,
going from high above you
on my pious pedestal
to panting below you
in the altar of your bed.
It was such a swift fall
and I didn't have time
to catch my breath
before I was crying in my car
outside your house,
scratching at my wrists with bitten nails
trying to figure out what I did wrong.
The fights I was there for.

I was face to face and fully conscious
as we screamed death wishes
and searched out any weak spots,
some Achilles heel
we could dig our nails into
and not stop until blood ran.
It was when the fighting stopped
that I started slipping,
in the moments after the post-fight fucking
when you turned to me and said *get out*
with no energy hiding in your eyes,
with no passion left at all.
That's when I woke up to realize
you had let me go.
And that's when I fell from desperate to pathetic,
when I no longer held your interest
but still kept screaming,
this time to the freckled skin
and jutting shoulder blades of your turned back.
I never got a say in this matter,
never got a parting shot,
a final *fuck you*,
any type of closure at all.
So when you call me crazy
just remember that I didn't get here by myself.
And I guess all this means you can't look at me
anymore,
that I've dwindled from love to annoyance,
reminding you only of what's ugly and misshapen,
what marks up your adolescence
with deep, bloody gashes,
keeps it from fitting nicely in your memory.
But if you don't mind,

I'll just stand here screaming awhile longer
and you can tell her
all about this pathetic girl you used to know
that just won't leave you alone.
But make sure you also tell her
that the leap from desperate to pathetic
is a short but steep one,
that once you lose interest
she won't even have to jump;
you'll be happy push her.

~Alison Mitchell

Phoenix Falling

They called me Nixie. That's who I've been till now. Nothing else about me really matters. Except this story. But it's not really mine—it's her's. It's the story of an end. It ended on a day that like all endings are never seen until they've already happened. For me it was an end that forced me to begin—because they're all that way—we just don't know it until much later. It's about the day we both died. I came back again like I always did. But for the first time, I came back without her. So I am going to tell you about this day I don't remember—about those twenty four hours and the twenty four years that lead up to those hours. My story ends in a hotel room. As I lay dying with the hot breath of late morning sun pounding on my face, I came upon something I know I could have only found amidst the ruin of a desecrated life. For there in the rubble, in the darkest place that I have ever been, was the one reason I have ever had to save myself.

She never knew that I was there with her but only a million miles away. Unable to move or speak but longing to curl up in the corner across the room, across the world, and hug my body so hard that maybe if I wanted it bad enough I could disappear forever. I used to tell her it was ruining my life and love it even more because it justified the greatest hatred that I had—the one for me. We used to think that we deserved this feeling and everything it had turned us into. I doubt she ever knew that our unworthiness wasn't our own or that we had willingly accepted it long ago. The thing we both saw every morning in the bathroom mirror wasn't our fault. It was something I wouldn't have recognized if it hadn't had my eyes—a face that far surpassed its twenty years of life, aging more rapidly than any living being possibly could. A body inhabited by a living figment—one that knew too well the slow slither from a hole of broken blackness. This is where I would meet her—in this empty field of desperate illusion and starving, carnal desire—the place of the walking dead. We'd roam the streets in the painful light of living—dehumanized with hollow eyes that no longer made an effort to hide anything behind them. She never knew I was there at her side. There at the best—that was always the worst of it. Chasing it. Chasing it. Chasing it—anywhere I saw it go. And then the panic that maybe we'd never find it because deep inside somewhere lost we both knew what we were chasing did not exist. That is the pain that would shake me until I was certain my bones were going to shatter into dust. It is a realization that is only alive very briefly and yet in

it, one discovers every truth there is to know.

This truth is the kind that forces you to see what the sober you never will. It's the truth that you have forty dollars left in your pocket and it's only going to one of two places. Either you can eat for two days or else you can buy yourself one last forty-dollar minute of being high. When you choose to starve yourself to avoid sixty-seconds of that pain, you are knowing the truth. You are an addict. You are a drug addict like the ones in the movies, like the ones on the steps of the public library—and like them, you have no idea in hell how you got there. The addict—the one who good people step over and forget with a graceful skip that resembles the avoidance of a crack in the sidewalk. Whether the human crack is unconscious or dead never crosses the good person's mind. The only matter of concern is not touching it. And so in this brief realization you learn something that can only be taken in by a brain drowning in cocaine. You exist on the level of the homeless and the insane—those who saw the horror of reality and had to leave it. You are hated more than anything because you are a reminder of that reality; the one the rest of the world spends every minute of every day attempting to ignore. But you can only stand there and listen to it all; trapped in what you know is the worst pain there is—the kind that can make you kill yourself even if you don't want to die. And so where the forty dollars is going is a trivial decision to make. You know I can go two days without food because you've done it. What you don't know is what you never do—whether or not you can survive coming down again.

It's funny how people think we chose this for ourselves. As if I woke up one morning and decided that it might be fun to be a dope-junkie when I grow up. The ironic part is that all ever wanted was to make them happy. That's why she's dead and I'm here right now telling you this—because it was wanting their love so bad that lead us to the end. It was hating myself because I could never be good enough for them. For I would have died for their approval and almost have a million times. I think it's funny when they ask me why I chose this path, when they are the ones who chose it for me. They made me into what I became like they make so many others—the bulimic thirteen-year-olds and prepubescent prostitutes. They made us all. In the end I knew it, but by then it was too late because I no longer recognized my face. All I could see was an empty shell—its soul sold long ago to the ideal of a society no better than hell. That is why I was terrified of my reflection because in it I always saw someone who was already dead.

I used to study her face too—after the drugs were gone and the fantasy of hope had washed off us both. I would look at her and I would see her as I used to seventeen years before. I would see the shadows bouncing off the contours of her profile, outlining something still as familiar to me as it was then. It had shifted, but I still knew it. Life had made it hard and the kind of sad that comes from being tired way too long. It had changed, but it was still the face I had been with my entire life. She never knew I longed to tell her I still saw it or the many endless times I actually tried to—struggling to push the heavy weight of words like “remember” and “beautiful” off of my tongue. I never could do it though. I never could move them because I didn’t know how to save her. Even if I had, I don’t think her eyes would have listened to me anyway for over time they had become separate from the rest of her. They would stare unashamed for hours through any window at any kind of nothing they saw honesty in. I too, was lost in that silence beyond any loneliness there is. There, giving into the sun—red, reluctant and threatening to rise—its mess spread wide and dripping off the part of sky that has no end and no beginning. It was somewhere buried in this loud and death-like place that we said everything to each other that we never could say in words.

She never left that silence and that is why today I must live for us both. I must go back and remember what I used to be. Before I learned to dress with perfection, talk with perfection and seduce the world with perfection. Before I mastered the ability to walk into a room and overtake it with myself—with my carefully rehearsed sex appeal and false enthusiasm. Long before the toothy smile was born that hid behind its sturdy facade a stream of endless tears.

I must return to the place our journey to the end began—to the day I decided to become everything I thought they wanted me to be. I never knew I’d have no way out because the Barbie-Doll-Body exterior I had built was not my own design. It was a human blueprint dream of life by a twelve-year-old child with a flat-chest and braces who no one would accept or love the way she was. The little girl who was always too sensitive and always too unafraid promised herself that she would change every one of her flaws. So she pretended to be careless and cold to human emotion and she became an object of sex like the ones she used to lust over for hours in the magazines. She vowed that she would never fall in love or ever love anything too much. Anything she could lose. In time I taught myself to act stupid and to talk about things that were never too real. I would drink till I couldn’t stand

up and nothing mattered—because then I could forget this girl and all that she had ever been. In the end my wish came true and in the end only drugs could dull the pain that it brought with it. After ten years I had become the empty vision of everything I hated but thought I needed in order to make them love me. Ten years of endless blackouts—nights when I stood on top of my artificially-lit world, only to wake up to burnt-out light bulbs, a stained shirt and an empty wallet. We started chasing the high long before we ever used—searching for anything that promised to let us forget ourselves. The only reason I woke up was that I had to. After a ten-year journey, we both arrived at the end—the place where my story begins. They found us crumpled up like paper dolls on the floor of a four hundred and fifty dollar hotel suite and later when they asked me how we got there, I told them I didn't know.

Payton died covered in her own puke. Her skin was blue and hard like a leather jacket. How it happened didn't matter to anyone but me because all they cared about was that she didn't overdose. The cause of death was attributed to her "choking in the night on her vomit." I only cared about what killed her because I was there when it did—with my face buried in her feet. They said it could have happened to anyone and by that they meant anyone but her. And so it all worked out the way it was supposed to in the end. Laurie was able to bury her daughter believing that no one would ever know—because all the track marks had been painted over and by the time her hair was perfect again, her cheek bones blushed and her lips positioned in a smile intended to say nothing; she was ready. It was like this that she was presented to the world two days later, dressed in white and sleeping like an angel. In death she finally achieved the one thing in life she never could. She gained at last the absolute acceptance from a world that no longer mattered to me because for the first time in my life I was able to see it for what it was.

I wasn't there but I knew what was being said in the bathroom and in the quiet whispers that lingered in the corners too long. They all knew what Laurie had tried so hard to hide from them. Everyone knew the dead girl in the casket was a heroin addict who had died in a hotel room with a needle in her arm. Her mother didn't realize that no amount of makeup could cover up that knowing nor was she aware that in the end, it was only her child's death that they had ever needed to accept her in the first place. Behind the tears and the prayers and the desperate cries for reason, they all enjoyed a gentle satisfaction that occurs inside anyone who has figured out life the way it is supposed to be, in

neat little boxes that allow no room for the new. To them, Payton belonged in such a box. She was a drug addict and death was where she had been placed. And so they welcomed her lifeless body in a way they never would have done had she been in it. The girl whose silent strength and eyes that could never be understood, never be categorized and never explained had been caught. Like the capture and killing of an animal too extravagant to be appreciated in nature, they would remember her not for her life but for how beautiful she looked that day tamed in her death; stuffed and mounted in her wooden box, the only box they could ever, truly fit her into.

But the box contained only the leftovers, the baggage she had dragged with her silently for all those years. What they saw was only what they had given her. In the end she could no longer bear their weight because her eyes would never stop searching out the window for the truth. And there she lay, the remains of their undoing—the ruined pride and dignity, the trampled on self worth of a woman who never knew she had been more worthy than all of them put together. Payton was long gone by then anyway; taking with her all but her body—unlike any of us, the only thing she could have ever lived without.

My loss of memory made it easy to answer all their questions because they only cared about knowing the irrelevant things—whom we were with, who drove us there, whom I got the drugs from and everything else that didn't matter. I answered them all the same way—I told them I couldn't remember. No one ever asked me the one question I did know the answer to, the only one that was important. Only later did I understand the reason for this—everyone was too afraid of knowing it. Somewhere we all knew the question was too complex and too time consuming to unravel. It was one that involved effort, unlike the answers to all the others, which could be swallowed up and digested in a single instant. Knowing the name of the cab company we used that night had a reply that didn't force us to look at ourselves. Why I was found draped over the dead body of my best friend—had one that did.

But I never gave them this answer because they never asked for it and also because it was twenty-four-years long. No one wanted to hear that anything else had killed her. It was easier to blame the drugs than it was to blame the world. Even I tried to tell myself it was the heroin that got her in the end and not the long, searching years that led her to the night she died—guiding her like a silent ghost to her first drink, her first line and to her first fuck with a stranger in a lonely

parking lot, in the lonely pursuit of unattainable love. But I knew better than that and it made me sick to know the rest of them would never know. Why those years took her and not me? That's the part I would find out later.

They called me Nixie. It was short for the name I hated. Payton called me by my real name just to piss me off—her and my mother—but Mom did it because she said it was beautiful. Long before any answer would have mattered, I asked her why she named me after a magic bird that would never stop dying and being born again. She laughed and said that someday I would know. Then the laughing stopped and her face turned sad. She told me that you need a strong name to survive this life and that she wished she had one. I thought her reason was just as stupid.

Change—in the end, Payton left me like mom did and everything else. But like I said, no part of life has an ending—in the end. So in the beginning of having lost the last of my world, I found out what it was about. Change—the only thing I thought I could depend on, but I was wrong. Half-dead I found something that had loved me more than any of them ever had. It was in a coma, unable to breath or urinate without a machine that I discovered its love. And it was in me—more alive than anything had ever been; fighting to live and to exist. It was dancing and I could feel it shaking every bit of me, setting me free while holding me tight. Caught in the endless white of a space that shelters neither life nor death, it held me. It was as I lay dying that I finally began to live. Change—they all left me in the end, all but the one thing that wasn't going to let me die—the same thing that had kept me alive all along. It was the part I never knew about. Change—the one that never would. I woke up a week later because I knew my name would always save me.

My life right now can be explained as such: I am like an infant learning to walk. I am relearning everything I thought I knew. I am searching for the person that I truly am and waiting to find out how this discovery will influence the decisions I make and the actions I take and ultimately, how it will define what my life becomes. This year is my life beginning again as I dig up the past twenty and throw away the guilt, the blame and the fear for good. It is mining for the tiny pieces of gold that are buried within the grime of those years, dusting them off, trading them in and using them to buy a beautiful future.

It is slowly removing my mask and armor—because I have already survived the greatest war there is. It is discovering the people who will be my safety net when I reach too high and start plummeting

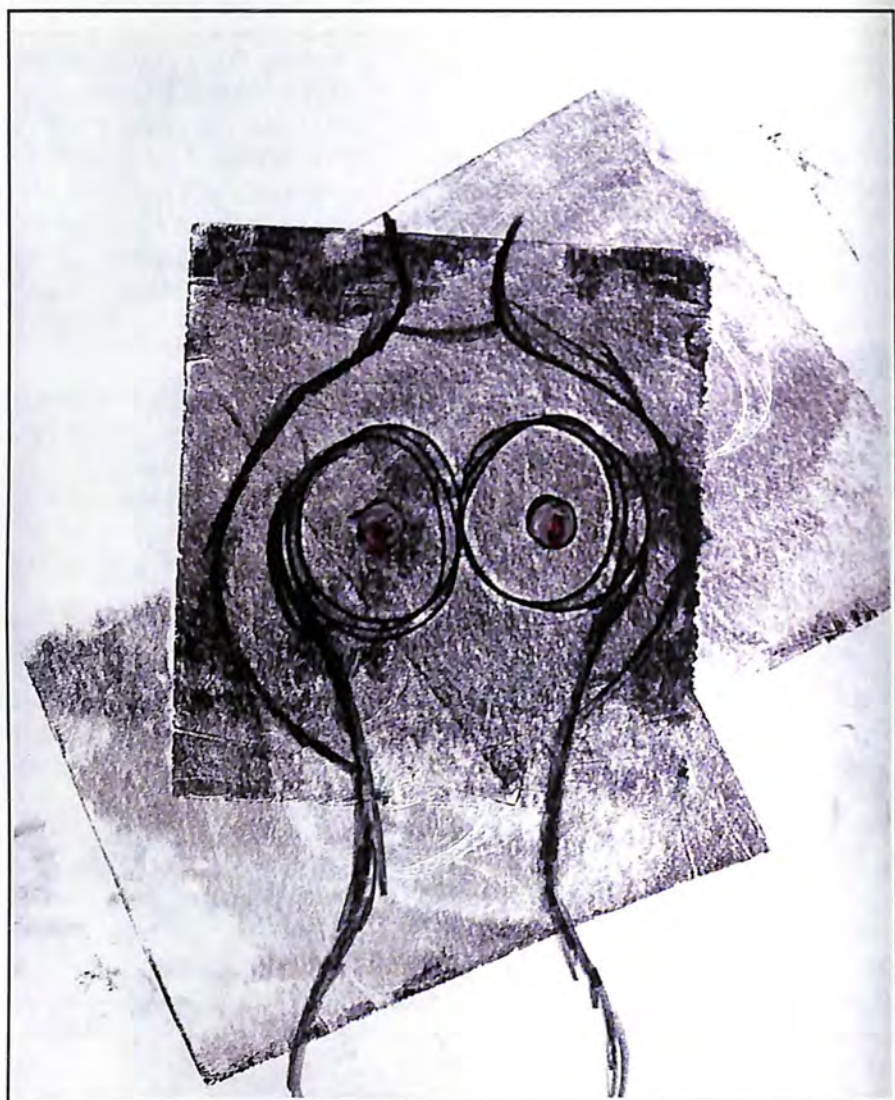
to the ground. It is reaching too high again, knowing that maybe this time what it is I am reaching for isn't beyond my grasp. It is turning my body inside out and wearing my mind, my heart and my soul instead of my legs, my tits and my ass. It is hoping that a guy is looking at those things when I leave the room. It is knowing that someone was.

It is looking in the bathroom mirror and not being afraid of my reflection for I've already died more times than I can remember, but now I know I can be reborn. It is looking again and this time, seeing past my face. It is ultimately seeing past myself and even past my life. It is living for a cause far greater than my own. It is telling a story that I never wanted to tell. But it is telling it anyway—because it isn't my story—and it isn't her's either. It's about us all. It is knowing that if one person hears me, I have won.

And it is believing that beauty still exists—the only true beauty we can ever possess and in the end or the beginning, the one we find out we've had all along. It is our greatest power—our ability to withstand and rise from the most horrendous forms of human suffering and despair. It is believing that no matter how many times you fall and burn to the ground—you can always fly away again. It is never not believing this.

On October 23, 2005 at 1:49pm, Angela Payton and a girl they called Nixie were both pronounced dead. My name is Phoenix DeVere and I was born the following Sunday.

~Aurora Sunguroff



~Elisabeth Steinfeld

My Father's Drum

When I was younger I used to interview my father. I'd ask him the same questions over and over again until I knew the answers by heart. What's your favorite color, book, movie? What did you want to be when you grew up? I thrived off of his answers; they were the only way I got any information out of him. Purple, *The Outsiders*, Somewhere Over the Rainbow. A drummer. My whole life was created by his beliefs and thoughts. Who he was as a person, who I was as a person, fell into neat categories: favorite color, favorite book, and favorite movie...all the important things in life. Everything that was his became mine.

I hated asking Daddy what his favorite hobby was. His answer was always the same: "Well, I guess I'd have to say the drums," he'd begin. Then he'd lean forward and stare me directly in my eyes, trying to detect whether I was worthy enough to hear his complete answer. "You have to understand that it's not just a hobby. It's not that I like playing the drums, or that I want to play the drums. I *have* to play the drums. When my hands start moving they take on a life of their own. I don't even hear the music. I just feel my hands moving." That was the one thing I could never touch. I made futile attempts to play every instrument I could get my hands on. I learned quickly and I sounded ok. But it wasn't enough to just play. I had to be able to feel what Daddy felt. I couldn't get to the point where the beat took over my soul.

Daddy's sanctuary was the basement. His red drums sat at the bottom of the stairs, his Zildjian cymbals glistening like gold. I used to hide on the stairs and watch Daddy step outside himself and transform into a musical king. Every night he performed the same actions: he sat on his Yamaha throne, put his oversized headphones over his ears, took his drumsticks in his hand, closed his eyes, and sealed his lips tight. I'm not sure what he was trying to keep in, but it was clear he wanted to keep something from escaping. Why else would he close everything up so tight? With three taps of his sticks together the drumming would commence. It was like a secret ritual, a sacred dance of the hands that began in the darkness of the night and finished with the rising of the sun.

Daddy attempted to soundproof his temple of rhythm by stapling carpet to the walls and stairwell. He should have known that there was no way to silence the drums. They're not a sound; they're a

feeling. Two floors up, in the darkness of my room I felt Daddy's drums shake the house and lull me to sleep.

On nights when Daddy didn't drum he held late night phone conversations in the dining room. He'd skink down into the old chair with a picture of a lady and a man dancing. In the darkness I heard the heat turn on and felt Daddy's voice rumble in his chest. But I listened more to the beat of his heart: steady and strong like the drums. I'd tap the armrest in sync with his heart. Daddy would join too. I'd drift off to sleep dreaming of powwows and gentlemen in black tuxedos bending down to kiss the gloved hands of women in pink satin dresses.

The leaves had just begun to change when Daddy's father died. I had just returned from school and couldn't wait to tell him about the essay I had written about him. He didn't have time to listen to it. He brushed past me and entered his office to make phone calls to funeral homes and family members.

That night I dreamt that I was in an earthquake. As the house began to shake I ran outside screaming, "Daddy! Daddy!" As I called for him in the cold night air I watched as the windows burst open, spewing particles into the sky that became stars. The walls of my house came tumbling down and tears ran down my cheeks as I feared my father had died. But then I realized that the ground wasn't shaking, it was only my house. As the rubble settled, and the dust cleared the air, I saw my father sitting behind his drums, playing his heart out, unaware that he had created a drumming earthquake.

The next morning I awoke to the sound of rain beating against the window. As I stepped out of bed I stepped on a piece of broken glass. I instinctively fell to the ground and grabbed my foot, attempting to alleviate the pain and stop the blood. I looked around and saw my china set shattered in a million pieces. They danced on the hardwood floors, and it was then that I realized Daddy was still playing. He was beating his pain into the drums. I looked down at my foot; the blood had begun to seep through my fingers. I looked to the windows and feared they would share the same fate as my china set. I slowly let go of my foot and let my hands fall to the floor. As the blood began pouring out of my skin, the piercing pain came back full force. Tortured tears rolled down my cheeks. I rocked back and forth, pleading with my father, "Daddy please stop," I whispered. At the height of my pain, I finally felt the ground stop shaking. I looked to the windows; they stood still in the silence. I put my ear to the floor and heard Daddy's heavy feet walking up the basement steps. It was over. I looked down

at my foot, ready to reapply the pressure. The bleeding had already stopped.

I never thought there would be another night like that, but it got worse after New Year's when Daddy's best-friend, Kevin, died. He had somehow managed to cut his ankle. It wouldn't have been a big deal, but Kevin was a hemophiliac and Daddy couldn't make him stop bleeding like his drums had made my foot stop bleeding.

At first, Daddy seemed fine. He told stories about Kevin over dinner. He even pulled out pictures of them from high school. But one day while he was dressing for work I heard a sound I never thought existed: Daddy's heart breaking. I looked out of my bedroom and watched Daddy put his hand on the wall. He tried to hold on for as long as he could, but eventually his body fell to the floor like a beaten dog with its tail between his legs. He howled and moaned for hours on the floor of our hallway. It was then that I understood what Jeremiah must have sounded like when he wrote Lamentations. I had never seen part of a person's soul die. I wanted to wrap my arms around him and tell him it was ok, but I couldn't. All I could do was climb into bed and force myself to cry like daddy, to hurt like him.

That night I heard his drums cry out in pain from the beating he gave them. As I tried to sleep I wondered what they had done to make him so angry. I went down the next morning to stare at them. His Zildjian cymbals no longer had the Midas touch. They were dull and dented, beaten into instruments of pain. I sensed that I wasn't supposed to be there. I ran from them, the pain, and Daddy too.

Spring was a silent time. Daddy didn't drum as much as he used to. I stopped giving interviews. There was nothing more to ask and Daddy didn't have time to answer. I began sleeping with a radio on nights that Daddy didn't drum. There was something eerie about the silence of the night.

In the summer when Aunt Kay died unexpectedly, I prepared myself for an all night battle between Daddy and his drums. I climbed into bed and made myself small like Daddy was the day he lost part of his soul. I tensed every muscle in my body, anticipating the moment Daddy's feelings would shake the house. But Daddy didn't drum that night. He didn't drum like he needed to, not like I needed him to.

It's been over two years now, and Daddy's drums still sit abandoned in the basement, just waiting to be played. So I wait here in bed, listening to the radio instead of Daddy's feelings.

This year, for my first essay of 6th grade I have to write a per-

sonal essay that describes the most influential person in my life. I know I should write about a politician, or a famous author or somebody important like that. But nothing has influenced me more than the beating of the drums. My whole life is wrapped up in that feeling. Daddy has begun playing again. He plays almost every night. And even though he hasn't played like he needs to, hasn't beaten out part of his soul, he's still playing. In Native American cultures the drums are the heartbeat of the people. Daddy's heart is still beating, and I don't have to ask a single question to feel that.

~India Warner

A Chance, Perhaps

Transient ties lend pulse and breath
to the shapeless sphere;
the rhapsody
of liquid, glassy Life.

Our fleeting glance,
deaf to its taps, can see
delights; dimly glimpsed sparks,
but mere shafts of glee,
facets flickering in the larger
unseen crystal tapestry

amidst the silent thunderclaps at sea.

The amoeboid mass, with endless reach,
weaves and wraps and retreats,
a Gaian canvas filigreed.
Through the maze it's drawn blindly,
it adapts and beats,
now trapped, now free,
in relapse it faintly breathes,
gasping, it revives and seethes

like floating rafts on a heaving sea.

The agaric's frail fruiting cap,
the stool from which we flap
in reverie,
veils its humic heart and lungs,
its edaphic, lacy, hyphal mass,
as forgotten ghosts of builders past

sleep their unheard, buried naps,
weary from the glow they cast
in mastery.

The beacon's source we fail to see.

Our feeble scan, aimed narrowly,
skirts the prism raised to Thee
to find our maps, to fill our gaps,
prayers for a dream to be.
With lens askew we skim and cache,
around our phantom niche we scratch,
only to collapse the mystery,

thinking it was scraps for free.

The miracle now cools and fogs;
The visage fades,
the lifeline saps.
Now we hear the distant strains;
feeling trapped we mourn our haps.
The fragments swirl about our grasps;
We clutch the shards but only bleed.
We fumble to repair the clasps,
frightful moans, plaintive pleas.
The howling of our desperate gasps
drowns our pulse's fading raps,

Yet still, we have a chance, perhaps
we'll see...

~David Morimoto



~Amy-Nicole DuFault

Intertwined

Each day
Everyday
A challenge to be faced,
(I am aware...)
...Always

No choice
No interest
Resources misplaced,
(Sad story to tell...)
...Always

Not lessons
But learning
Should happen everyday,
(We all know this...)
...Always

So how
But learning
Should happen everyday,
(We all know this...)
...Always

So how
We ask
They do what they are told,
(They need to know...)
...Always

The system
It's fixed
Push me through the mold,
(You know you will...)
...Always

I can't
I won't
I'm never going to fit,
(Take me as is...)
...Always

Enveloped
Inspired
Don't mind if I slip,
(You will, too...)
...Always

In time
You'll see
There's never just one,
(We can make it work...)
...Always

Promise me
Please
We'll get it done,
(I won't forget...)
...Always

~Jen Dubis

Mea Culpa

It is easy to miss the struggle when you walk
The path of the noonday sun. Springtime birds
Chirp brightness into smallest suggestions of shadow,
Worn brick walkways scrubbed clean in directness.
There is an address for
Waste in the plaza where discards mount and fall.
The silent town crier
Histories us one piece at a time. Have you seen our
dog,
Answers to the name of Fluffy. Our eyes forget
Ice cream smudged napkins tumbling lazily in a
refreshing breeze. Passing
Usefulness leads to ignorance of necessity. The
sticky-sweetness
Of innocent laughter masks grubby fingers while
squirrels hide acorns and
Do not attend worries in polite conversation. We
blind our deepest wounds
In sunlight — what is not there is glaring. Busy
Termites crunch noisily in interior darkness.

All of history's dirty little secrets should suffer this
treatment,
Illuminated into normalcy. This product may contain
traces of
Nuts. Triviality of evils and inconsistencies. It cannot
be as simple as
A reaction causing death.
The outdated vinyl wallpaper is ugly but
Washes easily in a simple solution of soap and warm
water. Once it is

Happened, it can no longer be called 'mystery'.
Behind cool glass, Chocolate
Chunks solidify again in a blanket of
Warm-from-grandma's-oven. We cannot touch
scent

It will stay with us well into the evening. Sandpaper
is rough
Against the skin. The motor purrs staccato curled in
the warm spot, gold
Shining in its light beside a solid armoire. Well-made,
a towering
Behemoth of back-breaking intensity. Feel the
Smooth, rounded lines change what is real in
Creation. A concrete slab will not stand on ideals
and visions. The
Necessary latticework of ugly, dirty little things.
Garbage hides
Behind fences and shrubbery. Beautiful, growing,
bloated in self
Importance. The plane has not left the sky.

You will find her perched gracelessly atop the
wooden seat. The air of
Authority the chair implies lost
Under pale flowers dancing in sloppy folds of pink
rayon.
Bright blue walls, fading dusky in faltering light. 'Like
Sands
Through the Hourglass' — twelve o'clock, channel
Thirteen. Eyewitness News blares from its all-knowing
orb
Tells her all she needs to know. Forgetting
Herself a moment of clarity. Yes, I will make the

banana muffins

With nuts and whiskey. It stays with her well into the night.

Warm, rich butter comforts the wound as the sky brightens

Into day.

~Crystal-Grace Skeeters

Stumbling

I lie looking in your eyes
scared to death
Loving you, and afraid of it
As you ask if I trust you
If you only knew
I want you to know the truth
Instead, I nod and say yes
Of course I trust you.
I want to scream
"I'd trust you with my life!"
But I can't say it
I know you don't feel it
And you don't want to hear
the things that are pounding
in my head.
I don't trust myself
And who I am
When I'm around you,
when I think of you
I stumble, trying to find an answer
to the questions
You'd never take advantage
And I know you know how I feel
it's written on my face
But I'm afraid to lose you.

~Amy-Nicole Dufault

Nicole

She cries for Daddy
You hold her close
Whispering nonsense in her ear
Close to tears
Trying to calm her
How could you do it every day?
"I know honey, it's okay."
But how can you lie to her?
Daddy's gone and can't come back
No matter how many wish boats ask.
So for this week I try to help forget
And try to hold my tongue.

~Amy-Nicole Dufault

I. Untitled

The thought of what it is hangs in the air.
The night's stillness can bring me there. I could not
bring myself to say
the things I want to say.
I know I missed my chance,
but what can I say, that
I could not bring myself to say.
Because if I do I will go too far and
there is no going back from there.
I can't pretend I didn't want to say it, because
I did. Before we parted
I told you nothing.

II. Untitled

Take me as I am
because I am
there. No more no less.
Whatever that means.
At any time, in any place, in any mood.
Even when I don't say what is wrong. I can't
fight the tears.
It is all the same to me. So make your case and
we will see.

~Rachel Alschuler

Theories

"This perspective is wrong, the other infuriating."
Everybody winked; be innocuous
but over the ice's underside.

Dive to answer the question, Who's there?
Spanish conquistadors, who never saw a virgin
drinking bourbon and breaking up into islands
and getting the kissing disease.

Lost in a world of English. No wonder.
Lost in water, and fresh water, to geysers
and glaciers, weak with fever.
Under the ice, dive.

Until, all of a sudden
a clear-cut transition.
Rewind the tape. Watch it again.

You would not, for example, normally
dive and become nothing
but a land of sunsets.

As a consequence, build bridges.

~Deborah Fleur Milstein

Barely

You answer the door expecting the future
but instead find a different universe.
Fling the alphabet into the air, dive,
dash, pick up your shoes and run.
Teach me to persevere, to integrate
being and wanting, with-ness and without,
brave mornings, green trees,
autumn air, awake.

I need to seek, to aim, to pull, to run,
to carry, to cover, to hide, to hold.
We had a grand story built, and it fell,
hanging in the sky a little before it toppled,
as it had to, chunks of mortar dropping down,
just missing my next step-barely, but safe.

Now I get lost in this neighborhood.
Damn you, damn, for being what you are,
for not being something else.
Desecrate your idols and stand up.
Bury the pieces. Go.

~Deborah Fleur Milstein

Sanguine

She looks in the mirror; makeup perfectly shaded and sees the black mascara, the beige eye-shadow and red lipstick on her face. This is me - she thinks. Strange, she only knows herself as this person, this made-up woman. Without make-up on face, make-up on hand, and make-up in purse she doesn't really exist. The paleness of her other self, the un-made-up self is ugly, pastry, dry, with white lips, non-existent eyelashes - nowhere to focus on, just a roundness. Like a ball with no ascertainable features - just ugly.

There is safety in the reaching. Reaching into her bag, feeling for the smooth vessel of lipstick situated in the bottom corner of an over-filled mess of self. A mixture of necessary and useless only a woman's purse could contain. Taking out that lipstick, pulling the cap off and twisting the red up, she stains her lips. Her reflection in the bathroom mirror is made by red. She finishes filling in her lips. She is done, red is finished.

She is ready to go out, leave, be seen, see herself. There is nothing else, only this, only lipstick, only red-covering whatever shade of white that used to be there. There is only make-up, mirrors, reflections, neon lights. But what her lips, what the red, what her made-up face are really meant for are dimly lit mirrors, smoke filled conversations, the strong punch of men's cologne, covered sweat, and burning throats numbed with drink. The only real, the only goodness she feels at all is her cross-legged self on the stool of a bar.

Yet, legs crossed, red on, she finds herself hating the man talking to her - leaning in as though he may at some point tonight get inside of her. She hates them all- every single man in that bar - and she hates herself for it. Without them, who is the red for?

She stares into the glass in front of her, a strong meshing of blue Bombay sapphire gin and tonic water. Her red lipstick has left her lip imprinted on one side, some of it must be coming off by now. The more the man leans in and she refills her chalice the more she starts to forget - the lipstick, the mascara, the eye-shadow.

For one moment, she is free of reds and blacks and reflections. And all she wants is to take hand, wrap around an arm - elbow hooked in elbow - laughing when she tells of her strange habits and the ways she sees. She remembers dancing in the rain - heads up, mouths open, tongues out. She, Heather, Kirstin, and Charlotte were free. There were no reds, there were no blacks, there was just us, danc-

ing in the rain.

They call it lipstick, rouge, base, they call it full, rich, red. They call it eye shadow because even in the absence of deflecting light that plays a game of shadow with her eyes - a woman still knows that a shadow is there. They call it being made-up.

~Elisabeth Steinfeld

Marge

The primal sounds of dawn creep up a decadent building, past the rusting fire escape, through the hanging clothes of the second story, and into the partially open window of the third. Here lies our prostrate heroine asleep, while the early signs of morning glide upon her, illuminating her 'beauty.' The pale yellow sunlight filters through onto her greasy pock marked face, arousing her eyes to a flutter, exposing the dull mundane brown that people with great boring lives possess. Disturbed from her gray scale dreams, she wrestles her girth out of bed, waddling her miasmic corpus to the toilette. Sitting herself upon her great throne, task at hand, she begins the process of urination, while she stares drolly at this week's issue of *The National Inquirer*; the headline story features a hybrid cat-dog-child from the cornfields of Illinois. Standing, without paying proper dues to sanitation, she turns on the shower faucet, amber water streaming from the showerhead, eventually giving way to its expected transparency. Stripping herself of her coffee stained night shift, she awkwardly clambers into the steaming shower and begins to lather her pale undulating body; soapsuds ride mighty cellulite waves. Water droplets wind down her broad stodgy face; a soft caress never tendered by another.

Water off, she dries herself in a pool of murkiness. Stumbling, Twinkie like fingers grope for a brush, and delicately guide it through the glistening strands of auburn. Creeping rays of sun penetrate vaporous fogging steam, and her hair is set a fire with a burning golden halo. Fingers melt in seas of gold and red, while bristles soothe and calm waves into ripples of golden sheens. Tumbling waves settle, as pride melts out in a sigh, lingering in the thick atmosphere, marveling at the simplicity of beauty. Caressing her hair, she bypasses the scale and again dives back into the squalor of her room, hunting for something to wear, preferably clean. She begins the carefully choreographed routine of dressing, balancing and bracing against the wall to prevent a fall. Noting the snug fit of her pants, she heads out to the kitchen to prepare breakfast for one.

The phone rings.

The shrillness is startling against the relative quiet of the room. She wades her way through stacks of magazines. Copies of *Healthy Living*, *Eating Well*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Good House Keeping*, and *Better Homes and Gardens* are mingled with coffee cups of old and long for-

gotten dinner plates. Swatting away a cluster of tissues, she uncovers the phone.

"Hello?" Curiosity is laced with annoyance from the delay of her breakfast.

"Congratulations Margery Pitts! You have been selected from a pool to enjoy a five-day, four-night tropical vacation wellness cruise, sponsored by our new publication, *Better Living*." A southern belle twangs through the line.

Better Living... I've never heard of that before.

"Are you dissatisfied with your life..."

Nobody's life is perfect...

"Tired of trying to achieve that ideal body image with empty results..."

I'm tired of the diet pills, the eating binges, and my lack of self discipline...

"Then join us! And together with a team of experts, we'll start you on a tailored program that ends with satisfying results."

Together? With my needs?

"We are offering you a once in a life time opportunity to embark on a life altering journey where you can learn to befriend your body again..."

To like my body again...

"To begin your journey, please hold while we connect you to one of our representatives, and remember you can start living your life now!"

Only moments to decide and dead air lingers on the other side of the connection. Her hand hovers above the dial-pad, puffy digits poised to jump and disconnect the call. She is skeptical; *this is just another scam, who the hell ever heard of Better Living*. Yet lying below the surface of shallow disbelief, there lies the beating heart of a true believer... She could see there was little hope for happiness in her life in its present state, she was sick of the monotonous minimum wage filing job, the nonexistent love interest, and the strangling social circle that consisted solely of her mother.

Life has to be greater than all this.

What other opportunity is going to present itself? None and she knew it. This was it. In her stale mind, the future happiness of her life boiled down to this phone call.

She was booked on-board the cruise liner. The actual conversation was a blur to her, the hypnotic soft southern voice with its delicate dance of persuasion, charmed her credit card number out of her. She was entranced, fully ready to give herself up into any possibility of hope, not matter what the cost.

* * *

Whatever yearnings for breakfast Marge had, were replaced instead with a warm spot of hopeful light. Deciding to deviate from the normal routine of consuming breakfast (a modest meal of several eggs and a pound of bacon), Marge plops down in front of the television, flips on the news station, and blissfully dreams of her new life: a thinner happier life complete with male companion and Colgate smile. Sighing, she dazes into space; arms idly hanging off the worn green armchair, feet propped up on the coffee table and the television visible just beyond the rounding of her gut and between her swollen feet. Her eyes gloss over the set with its painted anchorwoman apishly gesticulating a story of woe somewhere in the tropics. Marge's eyes focus instead on the Caribbean backdrop, the palm trees swaying in the warm breeze, the water lapping on the shore. Eyes closed, she can feel the Caribbean sun on her pale skin; skin that encases a firm trim body in a neon pink bikini suit.

There's a knock at the door.

Startled, Marge rises gracelessly, and walks to the front door. There is only one person that it could possible be and she dreads this knowledge as she makes her way to the rhythmic banging. Grasping the knob, Marge gives the door a swift jerk, revealing an older version of herself.

"Well it took you long enough to get to the door," the round woman spits. Lips purse in bird-like gesture, as the woman gasps for breath: a combination of asthma and weight complicate breathing.

Mother: A loathsome thought.

Bustling into the apartment, Marge's Mother wades through a week's worth of laundry.

"Honestly, do you ever get off your lazy ass these days?" Slurring words escape loosening dentures that rotate slightly at the pronunciation of D's and T's. "This place is a mess," she pronounces as she surveys the clutter.

"Hello Mother," Closing the door, Marge strides into the pan-

try to prepare a cup of coffee.

Plopping herself decidedly on a kitchen chair, Marge's Mother fishes through an overly large bag, a fashion much beloved by elderly ladies. Bea, as called amongst her friends (Bertha amongst those strangers where rules of propriety prevent her from prattling insistently), pulls out several bottles of pills from her bag, lining them up on the table.

"Put extra sugar in my coffee, I don't like it if I can't taste the sugar."

Marge stalks back into the kitchen, sloshing two cups of coffee. The floor slightly quakes with Marge's annoyance, as she thrusts the mug in front of her mother.

Sipping the coffee, Bea takes a handful of pills. "How's the new medications working for you?" Marge carelessly inquires.

"Oh, well the doctor says the next step is insulin if these don't work," Bea tosses the pills back into her purse, listlessly. "So, do I even need to ask if anything is new in your *life*? You've haven't done anything worthwhile since you decided to dye your hair that ridiculous red. I think it's ugly. You should have left it natural, the color doesn't suit you at all."

My hair is beautiful now. It shines and glows just like the box.

"I like my hair this color and actually, there is. Even *you'd* be proud. *I was selected* to be a passenger aboard a private cruise. I'm going to the Caribbean next month. My ticket is in the mail as we speak." Pride exuded from Marge as she stared gleefully over the brim of her mug. Her eyes sparkled with merriment as she saw her mother's face contort in confusion and jealousy.

"You? *Selected* for something. What's the catch? Nobody just *selects* anybody. *You* least of all."

* * *

Pride is one thing Bea never had for her daughter. There were things about Marge that Bea just had to accept about her. One being that Marge would never be beautiful. It is difficult to imagine it now, but once Bea was beautiful. *Was* being the main descriptor. There wasn't a man in town that had not fell under the mystique of Bea's full lips and wild red hair. She curved and rounded in all the right places. She could charm and tease with all the innocence of a child, yet was fully aware of her affects on men.

Eventually Bea fell in love. Her parents forbid the relation-

ship, but Bea ran away with Bobby Spinolli, the love of her life, she thought. She thought their love would last forever, at least longer than the 8 weeks it actually did, but then she only found herself alone and pregnant in a foreign city.

And here she sits now, 35 years later and all of her life's disappointments summed up in the miserable existence of her daughter.

* * *

"Couldn't you at pretend to be happy for me?" Marge's initial amusement abates as she realizes the well worn path their conversation will take.

"Happy for you. Happy. For. You. It is always about you Margaret. Ever since I brought you into this world. Don't you realize the sacrifices I've made for you. And what have you amounted to?" At this, Bea stands, striding into the living room and stares at the television, "Nothing! All you've managed to do is distinguish yourself by your disgusting hygiene and size. And now, that I've sacrificed my life for you, given up my life for you; you want me to be happy because you have fallen victim to some *scam* that *think* you have *been selected* to run off to?" Bea, breathing heavy as her excitement irritates her asthma, moves back towards her daughter. "What makes you think you are so special?"

Numb, Marge stares at the face of her mother. Shame and pain color her face red, as she opens her mouth to speak. Words, trapped behind the embarrassment of her life as seen through her mother's eyes, strangle any attempt at argument. She allows herself to join her mother in reviewing the disappointment of her life, once again berating her existence and stupid false hopes.

The afternoon passes in quiet discontent. The sun traces a path down the wall and onto a heap of trash. Marge drifts aimlessly amongst the chaos of her self-hating thoughts, secretly trying to recall the southern voice that had brought her hope.

All the while Bea and Marge fulfill the mechanical gestures of their visits. Sitting vacantly in each other's company, despising the other, they mindlessly move in tune with the discordant harmony of their relationship.

"Well, I'm leaving." Bea, shoving herself off the couch rises and makes her way out of the living room, where they both sat mes-

merized by the Caribbean scenes on the evening news.

Marge, not moving or recognizing the movements of her mother, sits on the couch as it slowly absorbs her body into its depths. She sits this way, into the late night, not reacting to the sound of the door closing as her mother leaves, or the sound of the T.V. as the broadcasting is replaced with the empty noise of a snowy screen. She sits, and stares, dreaming of a ticket that will arrive with her name on it, praying that it *will* arrive.

~Natalia Santiago

Woman With Red Earrings

I am on a train, a train to New York. Neither my destination nor my past is on my mind. Memories of the argument with my boyfriend are not occupying my thoughts; I am distracted by the people surrounding me.

I see a woman with a soaking wet mini umbrella laid upon her lap. She is directly in front of me on an angle. I can see that she is looking out the window, unaware of the water seeping through her clothes from her umbrella. She is a woman that appears to be in her mid-twenties. She is very attractive, long blonde hair, blue eyes. I continue to stare heavily at her. I do this because she is unaware of her surroundings. Her blue eyes and their beauty fade as her eyes begin to swell and a single tear seeps down. I am so focused on this single woman that the noisy train filled with business men and women no longer impact me. The noises are drawn out and I become obsessed in understanding this woman's situation. The pain of the argument is lessened as I stay in my distracted state. The lack of people to talk to drives me to further analyze the woman who appears to be in mourning. Perhaps she is going to a funeral. She is dressed in all black; however, she is wearing deep red earrings. The earrings are long and have an intricate Chinese design on them.

My curiosity about this pale woman wearing deep red dangling earrings consumes me. I want to have a conversation with her to find out what is troubling her; however, I need to be polite and concerned and I need to find the correct words to speak. Do I bluntly ask her what is the matter, or do I subtly speak of the weather? I decide to go with the latter. The woman is far from me so I will need to project my voice and I must be careful of my word choice because she appears classy and vulnerable.

"I heard the weather would let up sometime today, hopefully by the afternoon." I stated matter of factly. Perhaps this was a poor word choice. I could have used the words "weather should improve" instead of "let up."

The woman turned to look at me with her clear blue eyes looking deep into mine, almost as if she longed for comfort. It was apparent to me that she was not thinking of the weather; she was deep in her mind thinking of a different, more important issue.

"Yes, I have heard the same." Her voice does not reflect her body language, or her stature. Although she is in a state of vulner-

ability, there is a strong presence about her. I expect this strength to reflect in her voice; however, it is very low and somber.

I do not want to pry into the life of this woman; however, I begin to genuinely care about her well being. I offer her a tissue. I dig deep into my tiny black hand bag and pull out a Kleenex. I pass it over to the woman and give her a nice big smile and look at her as if no one else is seated on the train. She positively responds to my warm caring smile. She takes the Kleenex, mutters the words *thank you*, dries her eyes and smiles back.

"I know I may seem out of sorts, I have just been going through some personal issues these last couple of days. I appreciate your generosity with the tissue."

She looks back at me as if she wants to continue a conversation. But she does not know what to say. She looks down, and then apologizes to me again.

"I am sorry for my appearance."

Perhaps she is embarrassed to show her emotions. She is American and in the American culture it is not socially acceptable to express negative emotions in public. It has a negative impact on others. Perhaps this is what she is thinking.

I begin to think to myself, possibly if I share my pain and the burdens in my life, maybe she will reciprocate.

"I know how difficult different life circumstances or events can be, they can bring horrible pain. I've been dealing with a boyfriend of six years. I just found out that he has cheated on me several times with a young blonde woman."

The words begin to pour out. I am uninhibited and caught in the moment. My emotions and my feelings run wild, as well as memories of the entire affair, every detail flows through my lips as I give my perspective of the story.

The woman interrupts; her voice is shaky and hesitant. "Try not to be upset that your boyfriend had an affair. At least he is still alive. My husband died unexpectedly in a car accident. I would do anything to have him back."

I am shocked and in distress. I do not know the woman, yet I feel pain for her. My problems suddenly seem inferior and insignificant to her troubles. I think of all the missed opportunities.

The woman with red earrings continues making my problems seem secondary to hers. "Nathan and I had been together since high school. We were high school sweet hearts. We were inseparable. We had our moments just as any other couple, although there was

still powerful love. We had a bond, a connection. Before his death I found out that I was pregnant with his baby. I didn't have the chance to tell him this great news."

"I feel horrible that you've experienced so much pain over these last couple of days."

I begin to feel even more sympathetic towards the woman.

"It feels as though I lost my boyfriend, too."

"I must have made my husband feel similar to the way you are feeling right now. I had an affair myself. Thankfully, my husband was able to forgive me."

I begin to think about my boyfriend and I feel the loss. I am not completely able to forgive; however, I decide not to carry the pain around with me.

As the train reaches our destination, our conversation comes to a close. As I leave the train and smell the fresh air I realize that ingrained in my head is the woman with red earrings. A woman so pale, so beautiful, and so classy with a hint of underlying mischief. She performed an indecent act, cheating on her husband, just as my boyfriend cheated on me. They are both good people; however, good people are capable of negative actions. I must remember, every human has a dark side and a light side. It is best to forgive a person's wrongful actions, although it may be impossible to forget.

~Lauren Donahue

Bittersweet Amaretto

Emma started drinking at twelve. Not twelve o'clock, twelve years old. Her family had just moved for the umpteenth time – it was the final straw. She was sick of trying to maintain friendships through letters and phone calls. It never worked anyway. At some point somebody would stop calling and the letters would stop coming. And making new friends was getting harder with each move.

"What's the point?" Emma thought, *"They all disappear."*

The alcohol numbed her pain – temporarily. For the past two months Emma had been sneaking shots from the liquor cabinet. She was always the first one home after school, so she had a couple of hours alone before her older sister, Ally, got back from field hockey practice. It was the perfect time for Emma to drown her sorrows without being interrupted.

After the bus dropped her off, Emma dragged her feet up the driveway to the front door. Fumbling through her backpack, she finally pulled out her keys and hesitantly opened the door, which led into a long empty hallway. She hated the silence of the vacant house. No voices to greet her. She dumped her bag on the living room floor, because she could. Who was going to tell her not to? Then Emma headed straight for the liquor cabinet and pulled out the bottle of Amaretto. It wasn't her first choice, but it was the only choice that would allow her to continue her routine undetected – at least for a while.

The Amaretto was given to her parents a couple of years ago by one of her father's co-workers at a company Christmas party. Mr. and Mrs. Walden broke it open that New Year's Eve and after a couple of sips they immediately retired it to the back of the liquor cabinet. Her mother didn't have the courage to pour it down the sink.

"What if they come over for dinner or something? Then we'll be forced to serve this crap," Mrs. Walden complained.

For now, Emma didn't worry about being caught. She just wanted to be numb.

She filled a juice glass with ice like she had seen in an old black and white movie. Wrapping her small fingers around the thick square bottle, she began to pour. She watched as the clear glass turned a beautiful shade of amber. As she walked to the couch her uneven steps caused the ice to rattle against the inside of the glass. She plopped down, grabbed the remote, flipped through the channels and began

sipping the syrupy cocktail. As she tipped back the glass the overwhelming fumes from the alcohol, disguised by the scent of almonds, singed her nasal passage. The Amaretto irritated the back of her throat, but felt warm as it finished its way down into what felt like her lungs and then to her stomach – she liked that feeling. Somehow the sweet almond flavor allowed her to forget that she was getting drunk: trying not to feel.

"It's okay," she told herself, "it's only one drink and it's not like I do it everyday."

She had just enough time to let the buzz take her far enough away, but not too far, before her sister came home. By that time the feeling would have already started to wear off enough that she could fool her sister into thinking that nothing was wrong. And with a few rinses of peppermint mouthwash she could keep her secret hidden more effectively.

But her sister would find out.

It was Saturday night, Emma and Ally's parents were going out for the evening. A friend of the family's was exhibiting her photographs at a local art gallery and tonight was the opening. It was going to be a late night of socializing and cocktails so Mr. and Mrs. Walden decided to leave the girls at home alone. At seventeen, Ally was clearly old enough to be left in charge, but their father had reservations.

"They'll be fine," their mother assured her husband, "Ally's been baby-sitting for the Bickford's for years."

"Fine," barked Mr. Walden, "If anything happens it's on your head." He thought back to all the times Ally had lied to them: the parties, the drinking, the boyfriends. He didn't want to stop trusting her, but he had and despite his gruff demeanor, Ally's deceptions hurt him to his core.

"Nothing will happen," Mrs. Walden reiterated, "They'll probably just stay up late watching movies."

Little did they know that Ally had different plans.

Mr. and Mrs. Walden had been gone for half an hour when Ally decided it was safe to call her boyfriend, Ethan. When Emma overheard the conversation she felt betrayed and neglected. Ever since Ally started dating, Emma felt left out. Ally just didn't seem to want to spend time with her anymore. Emma sat slouched on the sofa pouting at the TV when Ally came in to announce her plans.

"Ethan's coming over for dinner."

"Yeah, I heard," Emma snapped.

"What's wrong with you?"

"Nothing."

"Yeah, well you better not say anything to Mom and Dad," Ally threatened.

"Fine! Can you move? You're blocking the TV."

Sensing Emma's resentment and feeling a little guilty, Ally tried to make peace, "You can join us for dinner, you know."

"Maybe," Emma responded. After all she did like Ethan – he could be funny and he was kind of cute.

"He'll be here in half an hour," Ally then disappeared into the kitchen.

Emma lost track of time watching reruns of *Sex and the City*, which her parents forbid her to watch, when the doorbell rang.

"Can you get it?!" Ally shouted from the kitchen.

"I guess so," said Emma as she peeled herself off the couch. She opened the door and there was Ethan with a bouquet of flowers in one hand and a long brown paper bag in the other.

"What's up?" greeted Ethan.

"Not much. Ally's in the kitchen."

"Thanks."

After about ten minutes of giggling interrupted by brief moments of silence, Ally announced that dinner was ready. Ally had set the table and placed lit candles and Ethan's flowers in the center. She came out of the kitchen with a large bowl of pasta and Ethan followed with a salad cradled in his arms like a small child. They all sat down as Ally began to serve.

"Oh, I almost forgot," Ethan exclaimed. He ran back into the kitchen and came back with an opened bottle of red wine. He started to pour, but stopped when he got to Emma's glass.

"It's okay," said Ally, "she can have a little. She always has a little on the holidays."

"Do you want any?" he asked Emma thoughtfully.

"Just a little. Thanks."

They had a great time laughing and making fun of Ally's cooking, which had turned out to be quite spicy for an Italian dish.

"No, really, it's good. I'm just kidding," Ethan tried to reassure her.

"Whatever," Ally pretended to be hurt, but she didn't really care. She was just glad that he was there.

After dinner, they all cleaned up and then Ally and Ethan dis-

appeared into her bedroom for what seemed like a long time. Emma had returned to the TV, but was getting bored. She looked over at the half empty bottle of wine on the table. "*Why not?*" she asked herself and got up to pour herself a glass, which later turned into another. By ten o'clock the warm feeling she had felt from the first glass had turned into a constant spinning sensation. She started to panic and feared getting caught by Ally, or worse, by her parents. She remembered seeing people "walking off" the affects of alcohol on some TV show, so she decided to give it a try.

Forgetting that she was only wearing her pajamas and socks, she made her way towards the back door. She noticed Ethan's cigarettes on the dinning room table and thought "*Why not?*" and grabbed one from the pack along with the matches. Head still spinning and not functioning clearly, Emma began to run laps around the house in the dark. She must have gone around twenty times before she remembered the cigarette in her hand. She sat on the curb that ran along their driveway and made several attempts to light the cigarette. No matter how hard she tried to concentrate she wasn't able to align the lit match with the end of the long white cigarette.

"What the fuck?" she blurted out loud. Alarmed by the sound of her voice. Alarmed by her choice of words. She didn't curse. She wasn't allowed to.

Eventually, she was able to light the cigarette and after a couple of coughing fits she got the hang of smoking. She sat there in the dark, alone, trying to harness her whirling thoughts as the ashes burned down to her fingers.

"Ouch! Shit!" Emma threw the butt into the driveway and examined the burns on her fore and middle fingers; not realizing the evidence she had just planted in the driveway for her parents; not realizing that Ethan and Ally had been looking frantically for her for the last twenty minutes.

"There you are!" Ally yelled in a whisper as to not alarm the neighbors. "What are you doing?" As soon as she got closer and smelled the smoke and saw Emma's nearly crossed eyes, she answered her own question. "Oh my God, we have to get you to bed." Ethan helped Ally carry Emma to her room, remove her blackened socks, and put her to bed before he went home.

"I hope she's okay," he felt terrible and responsible. He liked Emma, she was sweet. It was hard for him to see her that way.

"She'll be alright," Ally said reading his thoughts. "See you Monday." They kissed goodnight.

Ally went to check in on Emma to see if she had fallen asleep. She stuck her head in the door and heard Emma breathing heavily. "Thank God," Ally said relieved. But as she began to close the door she noticed an awful stench coming from across the room, which she immediately identified as vomit.

"Shit!" Ally ran into the room to find that Emma had rejected her spaghetti dinner forming a semi-circle around her head like an ill-shaped halo. Ally's thoughts instantly raced to all the stories she had heard about various rock stars dying from retching while unconscious: Jim Morrison, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix. She didn't know if the stories were true, but that seemed irrelevant at the moment. Remembering that she had heard Emma's breathing only seconds ago, she calmed herself enough to devise a plan of action. Ally spent the next hour cleaning up the mess.

She changed Emma's pajamas and wiped her sister's face and neck clean with a damp washcloth. After carefully rolling Emma onto the floor, Ally stripped the sheets, threw them into the wash, along with the pajamas, and put on a new set of bedding. She wiped the wall next to the bed and the floor clean, grateful that they didn't have carpeting. Meanwhile, Emma was sound asleep in her drunken slumber, not aware of what was happening around her.

"How can she sleep through all this?" Ally asked herself out loud.

Finally finished, Ally dragged her sister's lifeless body back into bed. Then she dragged her tired and lifeless body into her own bed and quietly began to cry herself to sleep.

It's Sunday morning. The sun is burning through Emma's eyelids and penetrating her throbbing head. She has been awake for fifteen minutes, but has been afraid to get up. Each movement no matter how minuscule, is accompanied by a wave of nausea unlike any she has ever experienced. Images from last night flash in her mind, but there are several pieces missing within each scene. She remembers Ethan, the dinner, the episode of *Friends* when Ross scribbles a beard and mustache on Rachel's face, and the...the...

"Oh my God – the wine," Emma mutters to herself. She remembers pouring herself several glasses, but not much else after that. As she rubs the sleep from her eyes she notices a sharp pain coming from the fingers on her right hand. As she struggles to focus her vision, she makes out what appears to be two dime-sized blisters between two of her fingers. Just as she is trying to determine the cause of her mysterious injuries, Ally pokes her head through the door.

Ally's red puffy eyes squint as the sunlight from the open window falls upon her face. "Are you awake?" she asks Emma softly.

"Yeah, barely though," Emma replies. Her words burn as they vibrate their way through her throat.

"How do you feel?"

"Like crap."

"You scared the shit out of me last night, you know," Ally said with a tone of parental authority.

"Why, what happened?" Emma truly had no idea what had transpired the night before. She couldn't explain the burns on her fingers or the burning sensation emanating from her throat and lungs.

"You really don't remember?" Ally asks in disbelief.

"I remember drinking wine, but that's about it," again Emma struggles to put the pieces of last night together – unsuccessfully.

Ally refreshes her sister's memory with an insensitive frankness. "Ethan and I found you trashed in the driveway. We put you to bed and then you starting puking in your sleep. I thought you were going to choke to death."

"Really?" Emma shocked that she has no recollection of how she ended up in the driveway is now annoyed with her sister's shift in tone.

"Yeah really. It took me over an hour to clean up after you." Ally's resentment over her ruined date with Ethan, which had been boiling in her subconscious, began to surface.

Slowly, some of the previous night's events begin to seep into Emma's memory. She remembers Ally and Ethan disappearing into the bedroom, along with feelings of neglect and abandonment.

Sensing Ally's irritation, Emma becomes defensive, "Well maybe you shouldn't have left me alone for so long. And what were you guys doing anyway?" Educated by years of exposure to daytime soaps, Emma is fully aware of what Ally and Ethan were doing in her bedroom last night. But she tries to maintain her role of the innocent younger sister, partially to get back at Ally and partially to maintain the upper hand in what feels like an inevitable argument.

"First of all, it's none of your business what we were doing last night and second of all, you're old enough to take care of yourself."

"Why don't you just leave, I feel like I'm gonna puke and I would hate to get it all over your nice new pajamas."

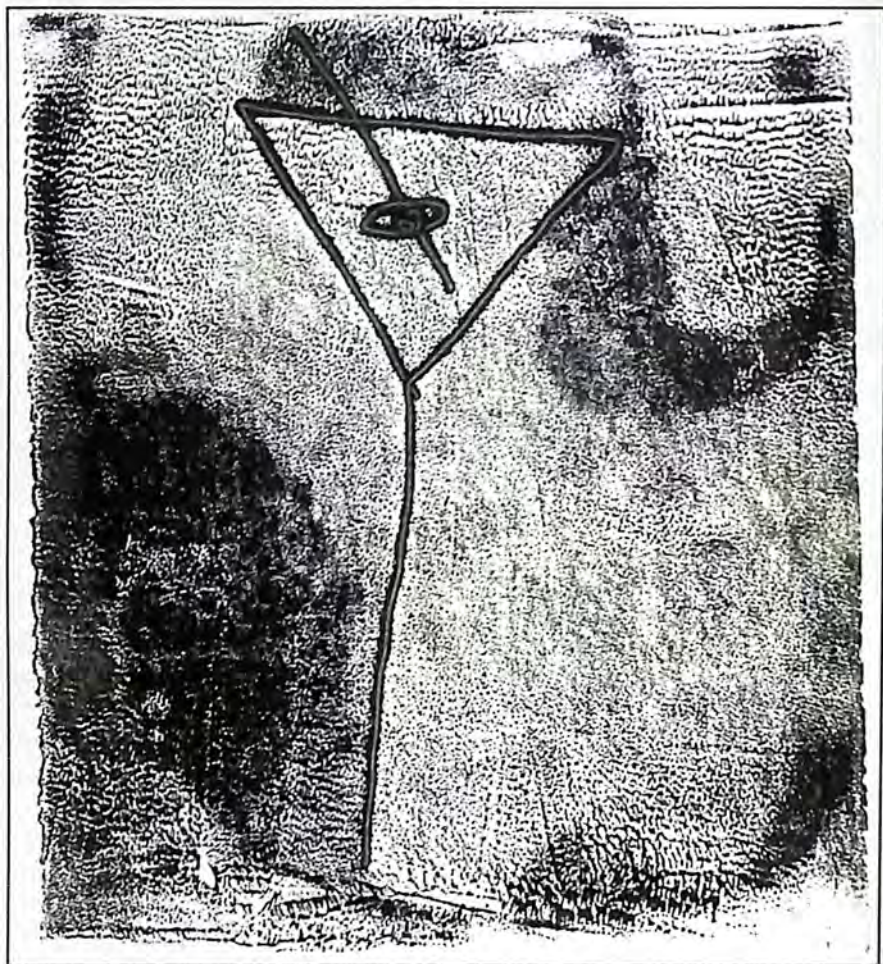
"Fine," with a toss of her long blonde hair, Ally exits in a huff, but not before getting in the last word. "Don't expect me to take care

of you next time!"

Emma remained in bed staring at the cardinals fluttering around the bushes outside her window like they did every morning this time of year. Ally's last words kept pounding through Emma's already throbbing head, *"You're old enough to take care of yourself. Don't expect me to take care of you next time!"*

"She's right," Emma thought to herself. Up until this moment, Emma thought that Ally was someone whom she could count on when she knew that her parents weren't there for her. Their mother and father were both so busy with their own lives that Emma and Ally were reduced to props in their perfectly furnished house. The girls really only had each other for emotional support and survival. But, at that moment Emma realized that she no longer had her sister as someone to count on either. At that moment, Emma realized that she had to take care of herself from now on. And at that moment, Emma decided that she could not take care of herself if she continued her after school ritual. That Sunday Emma stopped drinking at twelve. Not twelve o'clock, twelve years old.

~Diane Huseby



~Elisabeth Steinfeld

Below The Waterline

Walk with the dead
in New Orleans
above ground, where the dead live
so they can never fall
down,
only into.

Five blocks away
drunken women, breasts exposed
walk the streets
with guests and ghosts.
They are unaware
that all souls live here-
in New Orleans

I don't know if Voodoo
or graves
or alcohol, or warm
soot filled air
bring the living here.
Maybe it's the Mississippi,
or the Nile
or that Creole is the only language
the whole world speaks
because nothing is purely pure,
it's all a mixture of real,
or maybe, it's that Creole is the language of death.

If hell exists on earth,
it surely resides in New Orleans.
Walking down cobblestone streets of humid earth
you can pick your sins-
any kind of nakedness
the kind involving handcuffs
and money, the careless drunken kind or
the garbage that has nowhere left to go.
Below sea level
Below water,

What is there?
But the dead and the naked and
the mouth of a river that has nowhere left
to go.

Insanity breeds in this place
(It's in the alcohol)
the evolution of rogue living on the delta has made it that way.

The only holy, untouched place left is in the cemetery
St. Louis number one
Where calm is aloud
to live,
and it does
above ground.
Here, flesh is burned by a year's worth of sun.
So bones make the place what it is-
Just bones
because underneath skin, evil breeds
here, God can't find his way in
in a cemetery of bones.
So God spins in circles
Looking for the ground (where the dead are supposed to live)
But, Voodoo women have tricked him
in fear that he may be the devil in hiding

But, there is no edge here,
No cliff to fall down from or off of
because you are already below.
There is nothing to see
when you are as far down as you
can go.
When you are walking with the dead in New Orleans.

~Elisabeth Steinfeld

War

Camouflage and fatigue
Greens and dirty browns and beiges
Don't complement your soft, shadowy eyes.
Tears will be shed in waters
Where you cleanse your wounded hands.
A field of dreams
Is not a sandy, blood-drenched
Desert stretching miles
Into ominous skies
Dashed with ginger and crimson fireballs.

~Ashley Tripp



~Beverly Honeysuckle

Hole

Influenced by Allen Ginsberg's Howl

I saw the brightest minds of my generation demolished by
alcoholism, running lost,
crawling over empty promises through the broken memories of
midnight,
searching for the next answer, thieving victims dreaming of the
misplaced evidence of
their canceled connection to the father of yesterday in the
bleak, dark night,

Who lost careers and ended marriages and black-circled eyes
and drunk sat up
smoking in the black-lit darkness of the studio apartments
slithering across the shag
carpeting of stale bedrooms remembering nothing,

Who prayed to the gods of money, who left children waiting on
the doorsteps of the
suburbs at 3:15 for the forever lies of zoos, movies and amuse-
ment parks,

Who floated through the universities with dead eyes, sleeping
through classes and final exams, lined with blue books scribbled
with bullshit,

Who were thrown out of Thanksgiving dinner for loud and
absurd outbursts during
Amazing Grace on the last chance to pretend life was okay.

Who danced in and out of the rooms, drooling on podiums,
grabbing under aged
asses, rubbing their gums, lying through whistle-holed teeth
about lives they never even walked through,

Who curled up in corners of bedrooms, shaking and rocking,
cold sweat and fire burns of thee insidious banging on the walls

of their souls,

Who trashed the hearts of lovers, who flicked off the rings of
engagement, who
threw apple cores at the pleading eyes of brothers,

Who drove with one eye open and one eye wandering the
ash trayed streets of
spent childhoods, hitting deer or babies or garbage cans or
mail boxes,

Who cried to the gods of their obtuse churches and
synagogues, who forgot why it
was they even woke up the endless nightmare of their once
manageable realities,

Who gave up their truth for a pack of Marlboro Reds, who
starved their spirits for a
round at the decaying alcohol stricken dive bars of childless
cocktail servers and abusive husbands,

Who woke up next to psychopaths and rapists, who pleaded
with their demons, who
bargained with their devils, who sang to their parents the song
of denial,

Who stood under street lamps, shivering with deliriums and her
mascara stained
cheeks, bled with tears and snot,

Who swallowed Jack and Jim and cum and lies and dreams
and Valium and cigarette butts,

Who dresses to impress the con man in the glass and always
walked away with less
than they came in with,

Who forfeited their leases for empty hotel rooms with free HBO
and opened the
plastic wooden drawers only to find the Bible, who couldn't
see what everyone said they

saw, staring into the deep well of withered flowers, wearing
only their beaten watches telling
time on the clocks of insanity,

Who changed their names, addresses and identities only to
be caught in the act of their disease,

Who swam out of the undertow of fated existences to the
shore of possibilities for a
chance to walk shackle-free,

Who came back for the donuts and stale coffee of quiet
honesty and refrigerated clichés,

Who rode in ambulances, police cars with cages, family cof-
fins, and marching band trombones,

Who came up for one last breath, reaching and flailing their
spaghetti, strung out pale arms, reaching past the bruised layer
of dried blood,
reaching for a rope to pull their spiritless bodies out of the storm,

Who found light in their dark hallways, creeping,
teasing under the doorways of
tomorrow, chanting hopes of a brand new star lit by day,

Who put on their seat belts for another day and bruised their
knees and cried to their
God and danced under the mid-day Sun.

~Carly Israel

Simon The Painter

He lived just down the road
In an off set wooden house
Where deep pastures were close neighbors
The wind's voice is heard on his porch as he worked

Simon the painter played the part – wizard of the world –
Observing from afar capable of touching others when he
allowed

As he dipped his brush into the depths of his mind
A flavor so luscious and compelling presumed over you
Just as he spoke in words
That meant nothing for the moment
But somehow changed you

Simon the painter, untouchable to only himself
A man of content was desolate
Could anyone ever know him, would he let you?

Paintings saying more than what words could
For they did not do them justice
The world was created in his mind
To be a place of art and beauty for it was
Goodness would not be a selfish thing

Simon the most famous painter you never knew
Fearing something too righteous
Was consumed in a flame of his work

The house down the road fell through just as his life
The only presence of his being are the fertile pastures
Can you not hear him whisper, "I live on"

Simon the painter

~Marc Morin



~Jen Dubis

Child

The moment when we spoke your name
You were so pure and untouched by all
There was more to see in you than the world itself

Child of my blood live to learn
That the present is yours and yours alone
To change and to believe

New year what holds the things you never know
Remember the lighthearted and forget the gray
Tender heart, peaceful mind calm the storm for warm ride

Child of my blood live to know
That the present is yours and yours alone
To change and to believe

Ever time you smile it remains as it has been
Curious and true full and bright
You have and will continue to grow

Child of my blood live to teach
That the present is ours and ours alone
To change and to believe

~Marc Morin

My Armenian Uncle

Zap! A white spark jumped from my finger to my cousin's hand.

"Ouch," she cried. Her eyes turned black and she shuffled her stocking clad feet across the thick oriental carpet. I turned and ran toward the foyer. "I'll get you," she said, charging toward me. She raced after me upstairs.

Familiar, yet always new, Uncle Greg's huge house was like an indoor playground to my sister, my cousin and me. We kept ourselves amused during holiday visits as the grown-ups sat around the dining room table hour after hour. They talked. They ate. And they talked some more. What did these people have to talk about, anyway? It was time to play hide and seek in my uncle's office.

Uncle Greg had married my father's sister when her three children were teenagers. Aunt Mary's first husband, his face disfigured during World War II, abandoned his family. "He was never quite right in the head after he came home," my mother told me once. Some things are for the better, I guess. Uncle Greg was said to be a good provider.

Going to Uncle Greg's house was like traveling to another world for a little Irish girl from the country. He was Armenian, his parents straight from the Old Country. Aunt Mary learned to cook a lot of their native foods. Baklava, paper thin dough glistening with oily syrup layered with cinnamon and dusted with crushed nuts, crackled in my mouth. Who could wait? I snuck a corner from one of those crispy triangles.

When Uncle Greg was fourteen years old, he watched as a man filled an inner tube with air at a gas station. The tube got over-filled and busted. Pieces flew at my uncle's face. After that, he could only see a tiny bit, as if through a narrow, fuzzy crack on the left side of his left eye. It must have been a terrible thing to go blind as a kid. But Uncle Greg didn't let that hold him back. Maybe it even helped him along. He had to work harder. He had to memorize facts and details and that made him smart. Uncle Greg became a lawyer and a state representative.

Every two years, Mommie and Daddy made hundreds of bumper stickers to help with his campaign. My parents ran a sign shop. It was their business to make signs for people. Greg's bumper stickers were Day-glo orange with navy letters. His name stretched all

the way across the long, narrow strips. K-H-A-C-H-A-D-O-O-R-I-A-N! Khachadoorian. It looked to me like the whole alphabet, but I knew there were letters missing. Even though it was a mouthful, I never had trouble saying it. It was easy to repeat, and not that hard to spell, once I was old enough to make letters. It was a much bigger name than any of my friends' names. They all had simple names like Cooper, Bailey, Webber, Gray. Later, I met a girl with the last name Cassinari. Still, Uncle Greg had her beat.

"He's a crook," Mommie said to Grammie. "When people die, he settles their affairs. Then he takes a third or even half." Mommie leaned close to Grammie and added, "That's how he got that house in Florida. The people couldn't pay, so they had to give him the house. He's a crook."

I didn't care. Uncle Greg was interesting, and his house was fun to explore.

Uncle Greg liked to play games. He had huge playing cards. If he held things up close and on the side, he could see a tiny bit. He could see those big playing cards. He was good at cards. I wondered how I would hold those great big cards in my little hands if I ever had to play cards with him. Since he couldn't see, I could lay mine out on the table, face up, and he wouldn't know what they were. But he'd beat me at cards. He liked to win.

Uncle Greg played backgammon with his father. I watched them playing, their hands almost a blur as they threw dice and moved pieces. I didn't understand what it was all about. The pieces looked like checkers, but the board didn't have squares on it. Instead it had points. There was something about moving around the board and stacking up your color on the other side. It looked too hard for me. It looked confusing. I'd rather play sardines or hide and go seek with my cousins.

A favorite place to play hide and seek was Uncle Greg's messy office. Piles of papers covered every surface. Stacks of newspapers. Uncle Greg read Braille newspapers with his fingers. The thick pages were light brown, like paper bags, with no printed words at all. He held these big booklets in his lap, and ran his fingers nimbly over the pages. Tiny bumps, representing letters, covered the paper. I could see no words at all, but the pages had lots of words that my uncle could read. He raised his head and even closed his eyes as his hands moved across the paper. His fingers lightly touched the page as if playing a game. His big dark fingers were playing the game of read-

ing the dots to learn the news.

Being a state representative, my uncle had to be political. Uncle Greg was a Republican. And Republicans sure must like elephants because Uncle Greg had a ton of them. He collected them. "I have over four hundred different elephants," he told me once. "All sizes from big to miniscule." Elephants lined up on shelves in the kitchen, in the hallway, even in the bathroom. A big ceramic elephant with shiny stones on a saddle on its back sat on the floor. Embroidered elephants decorated blankets and tapestries on the walls.

Democrats are supposed to like donkeys and my grandfather was a Democrat, but he didn't have four hundred donkeys around his house. His house was really little. Maybe if he'd been blind, and a state representative and living in a great big house like Uncle Greg—maybe then he'd have had four hundred donkeys.

Delicious smells of roast turkey, butternut squash with nutmeg, and boiled onions wafted through the big house and called everyone to the dinner table. The large dining room table provided ample seating for everyone, even the children. Bowls and platters heaped with mashed potatoes, sweet peas, and bread stuffing steamed on the sideboards as yellow pats of butter melted and oozed over the mounded piles.

Uncle Greg's plate was always filled with more than anyone else's. Aunt Mary piled all the different foods on his plate, and then she stood next to him and said, "The turkey is at twelve o'clock. The potatoes are at six o'clock. The squash is at five o'clock." He sat there, a napkin tucked into his collar, a fork in one hand, knife in the other. And when he'd memorized the map of his plate, he'd start in on it. Uncle Greg was a big man.

"I'll bet he weighs three hundred pounds," my mother whispered to Grammie. "He sure loves his food. He should get out and exercise, but he can't 'cause he's blind."

After the main course, Aunt Mary asked, "Who wants dessert?"

My stomach ached from being over-stuffed, but I couldn't resist those pies? "Can I have a little piece of squash pie?"

"Sure. And what would you like, Greg?"

"I'll have one of each." And he always did. While the rest of us were served on little desserts plates, Uncle Greg's dessert collection filled another big dinner plate. Aunt Mary described a new map and

Uncle Greg ate it all.

After stuffing down the desserts, the kids and the men retired to the living room. The living room was always dark. The curtains were always closed, and behind the curtains, dark green shades rolled down over the window. I guess when you're blind, you don't bother to let in the light. You don't notice.

The furniture was big, like Uncle Greg. If I sat on the couch, I'd have to scooch back, and then my feet couldn't touch the floor. The fabric was scratchy, too. Usually I sat Indian style on the soft Oriental rugs. I could stick my fingers down in the thick, wooly fibers, like a dog's fur. The rugs were pretty, with interesting designs of different colors that made geometric patterns. I wondered why Uncle Greg wanted such pretty carpets when he couldn't see them.

Once Uncle Greg said to my mother, "Those carpets are an investment. I can sell any of them today for more than I paid for them three, four, or five years ago. You should buy a couple. Make some investments."

"I prefer broadloom," my mother answered. "It's easier to keep clean."

"You have to think ahead," Greg countered. "Investments will pay you back in the long run."

Later, my mother told my grandmother, "If I swindled people like he does, I'd have money to invest. Right now, I'm investing in what to put on the table for dinner."

Uncle Greg always sat in his chair in the corner of the room. His chair was made of leather, and he could push it back so he could 'recline.' At home, our own chairs were sturdy and had flat arms so you could set a cup on them and it would never spill. But none of our chairs, not one, reclined. I wanted to try Uncle Greg's chair, but I never dared to sit in it. And I never asked him if I could sit in his lap. I had to watch out for him. He might step on me since he couldn't see me. I learned to stay out of his way and not bother him. He didn't have babies of his own.

Next to Uncle Greg's chair was a little table holding things he liked to have near him. One was a telephone. Uncle Greg had a special service so he could call our house for free. He created a series of codes for the family. Our code was to ring his telephone twice. Grandma Morey rang once. If he heard the phone ring just two times, then he'd know it was Mommie or Daddy and he'd call right back. A crook wouldn't do that. A crook would not want to pay, and not care if we had to pay. Sometimes, my mother forgot and just let the phone

ring. My uncle made her hang up so he could call back; then they didn't worry how long they talked.

Right by his chair, Uncle Greg had things that you might need if you were sick. He had a box of Kleenex, a glass of water, and a bottle of aspirin. He had a magnifying glass to help him see things, like his big playing cards, through that little crack of sight. He had his Braille newspaper and a radio. He loved to listen to the radio, and he loved to listen to music.

A record player sat on the other side of the living room. Under the record player stood a metal rack that held vinyl records, some with weird covers that pictured ladies with their belly buttons showing and veils over their faces. The music was strange, too. It was twangy, but not twangy like my mother's Country Western music. The lady singers hollered like they were in pain, but they sang in another language, so I didn't know what they were complaining about. Sometimes, Uncle Greg sang along. He didn't dance, though. I was glad of that.

When we went to my uncle's house in the summer, the men cooked. They stood around a big barbecue in the back of the yard and flipped hamburgers and rolled hot dogs across the grill. Inside, the women made green salads or grated cabbage for cole slaw.

In the summer, Aunt Mary made yalancy that looked like little wet cigars. They were filled with chopped spiced meat, like a sausage, and rice and onions. The mixture was wrapped up in cooked grape leaves brushed with oil. My mother didn't eat those. They gave her gas, so I didn't eat them either. Not even just one bite. Uncle Greg ate yalancy like pieces of candy.

The grown-ups made many trips to a refrigerator that stood on the back porch. That fridge only had drinks in it. "Bring out the orange juice," Uncle Greg said. "I'll show you how to make a new drink." Uncle Greg knew how to make lots of drinks with funny names, like 'Harvey Wallbanger' and 'Screwdriver.' I'd heard of martinis from TV movies and shows with Dean Martin and Frank Sinatra, but they didn't drink Harvey Wallbangers. I wondered who Harvey was? Was he someone my Uncle knew in the city? Whoever he was, most of the grown-ups liked his drink.

Uncle Greg played bocce ball in his back yard. The balls looked a little like croquet balls, but there were no wickets, and no mallets. He played with his dad, just like he played backgammon. If a lawyer who

my mother called a crook played so many games, how bad could he be? My mother and father didn't play games with my sister and me. They were always busy making signs, even on the weekends. My sister and I played lots of game. Cards were a favorite, because there were so many different games. Our cards were not big like Uncle Greg's. Our cards were normal size.

"Governor Volpe stopped in yesterday morning," my aunt told my mother. "He said he likes the way I fry bacon. I wasn't even going to cook bacon that day, but lucky for me, I had some in the fridge."

"You mean to tell me," Mommie said, "that Volpe just stopped in for breakfast?"

"Yes he did. And he made his bodyguard wait outside. Big guy in a uniform, too. He probably would have liked some bacon, too."

"What was he there for? Volpe, I mean."

"Nothing, I guess. He and Greg went into Greg's office for a while. It's none of my affair. I guess it had to do with a vote that's coming up. I don't get involved in Greg's business. I've got enough to do with my job at the newspaper and keeping this house going."

"But imagine. The governor just stopped in for breakfast."

"Yes. I had to make coffee," Mary said. "Greg doesn't bother with coffee at home. He waits till he gets to the State House."

"Do you have to drive him in everyday?" Mommie asked.

"Well, sure. But I don't mind. Besides, my office is close to his."

"Don't you hate driving in Boston?" Mommie asked. "It must be nerve-racking. Even if I had my license, I wouldn't drive in the city. People must see you coming in that big car and get out of your way. Probably that license plate has something to do with it."

"K 12? I don't know. But people remember it. That's for sure."

My mother's eyes darted from Aunt Mary to me as she drummed her fingers on the linoleum counter. She badly wanted to tell someone that the Governor had had breakfast at her sister-in-law's house. She'd tell her friend Carolyn, and Grammie, of course, and anyone else she could think of. Maybe she wouldn't call Uncle Greg a crook anymore. Or maybe she'd think the governor was a crook, too.

A few years later, Grandma Morey died. Uncle Greg settled her affairs by buying my father's share of her house. He also bought

my other uncle's share and aunts'. At least we could still go to the lake house on those hot summer days. Uncle Greg didn't mind.

Years after that, Grammie's husband died. He was her third husband and they didn't get married until I was pretty big. His name was John. I never called him Grandpa, or anything like that. I tried never to have to talk to him at all.

Since he married Grammie so late in his life, he never changed his will. He left everything to his sister. Grammie was supposed to move out of her house and not take anything. But Uncle Greg said that wasn't fair. So he settled her affairs, too. He got her 'widow's rights'—one third of the property. Then he kept a third of that for himself.

"He's a crook," mommie said again.

I was confused. Grammie at least got something. Otherwise, she would have had nothing.

Uncle Greg used to let us stay in his house in Florida. It was a small house. I tried to imagine what he'd look like there, since he was so big. I thought he'd probably look squeezed in. Uncle Greg used to go to the Florida house in the winter. We always went to Florida in the summer, cause that was when we had the most time. We'd drive down, see the sites along the way, then we stayed in Uncle Greg's little house.

Since it wasn't used much, there were great big beetles that lived there. They were huge. Once, I stepped on one with my bare feet in the dark in the bedroom. Greg was always in the dark, since he couldn't see. He probably put on slippers as soon as he got out of bed so he wouldn't step on the beetles with his bare feet.

Uncle Greg died and no one even called me. Lots of people went to the funeral, but I wasn't there. My dad had died years before and his brother, too. Everyone had moved away, but I still lived in the same house. Greg still lived in his great big house, part of the year at least. I bought an elephant for him when I found out he was sick. I was going to send it to him. The elephant's trunk was up which was for good luck. But I guess he already had enough elephants at his house anyway.

~Bernadette A. Stockwell

Washes

I.

Janine tucks her nose and mouth into her turtleneck, locates the spray button and ascends the attic stairs, spraying the air above and around her with Raid Wasp and Hornet Killer. She hurls cloud upon cloud, billows of the poison, at the swarm coming in through the cupola over her art table. One large persistent hornet flits around and bangs her cheek. "Aah!" she cries, flailing at it with her hands.

There are already quite a few dead insects lying about the table from the dousing she has given the studio the night before. When she finishes spraying, she decides to leave the attic until the air clears and heads back down the stairs to get a cup of coffee from the communal pot in her uncle's offices which occupy the downstairs. It will mean saying hi to whoever might be in the little kitchenette. If it is Marge, the office manager, that will be okay, but she has no desire to run into her aunt or any of the salesmen. As luck would have it, one of the salesmen is pouring himself a cup as she comes in. "Hello, Janine," he coos. He lingers on her name as if it is a dirty word. "Raiding the cookie jar?" His eyes work their way down her torso and legs and give Janine a creepy feeling. She retreats up the stairs to the relative sanctity of her studio.

She shakes off this encounter, shrugs her shoulders, says, "Creep," and then settles into her work. With a small whisk broom, Janine carefully sweeps dead insects into a box to be used later or taken to the studio co-op in Manhattan where she belongs and is working on some companion pieces.

Her uncle's booming voice carries up through the floor boards. On the far side of the offices, her aunt complains about Janine taking their coffee without contributing to the kitty, a complete untruth.

"If they could see what I'm doing up here, they'd think I was completely nuts," she thinks. "Of course, what are they doing that's so sane? Pushing microwave ovens and Mr. Coffees around, twittering over dirty magazines and jokes." She hears the salesmen. Constantly. She has seen them late at night, drinking beers, parked in the lot below her window in the two room apartment in the house also on her uncle's property. She sees what goes on after hours, her uncle's son and these salesmen, when they come there to drink and avoid their wives. Sometimes they go into the office, she assumes, to take nips off her uncle's liquor cabinet. The men still think they're in high

school.

Janine resolves to go down and correct her aunt's misconception about the coffee, but stops herself. Why am I thinking of her? she questions. They're not worth it. Later I'll go down... Yeah, later. Damn them. No, damn me for letting them worm their petty concerns into me. I won't come down to their level and let my work suffer. I just have to finish this one section.

She talks to herself to refocus on a large oil, wax, and found object piece. She is gluing hornets to a border area, and sealing them in wax. Such black ominous insects, not black really, but coffee bean shiny brown, no longer menacing trapped in melted wax.

For all the drawbacks, Janine feels this living situation is the best she can do for now. Her uncle lets her work in this space for free, and she pays a fraction of what it's worth for the apartment. Until her classes fill up more predictably at the two, sometimes three, colleges where she is an adjunct teacher of art, she can't rely on a steady income, and she knows better than to count on prize money or commissions from her work. Only two of her classes filled this semester, so she is particularly strapped for funds. Still, she feels pressure from things she overhears her aunt say about her "mooching" and "using" her uncle. He always defends her and reminds his wife how his brother, Janine's father, helped him out when their son got that girl pregnant. Janine's father met the girl at the airport and brought her to a home the nuns ran for unwed mothers. It happened again two years later with the same girl, who Janine, at age twelve, never was allowed to meet.

But Janine knows it's only a matter of time when her aunt's complaints will finally whittle away at her uncle's feelings of obligation toward his brother. Janine moved to this little village in Connecticut, a one hour train ride from Manhattan, a little over a year ago. She had saved all her money and mustered the courage to tackle the big art world bolstered by her success in California. At the time, it seemed the right thing to do. She had received many favorable reviews from L.A. critics and won several competitions, and had one smashing success which gained her a permanent spot in the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art and a large cash award. She had spent six months assembling and painting the large Mandela, a whirlwind of urban debris held together by melted encaustic waxes into cosmic eddying. She had been sharing an industrial space with a couple of painters, and it was the happiest time of her life. It was then that her peers encouraged her to make the Big Move: New York was

still the world's big art Mecca, and so she approached a well known critic. He advised her to go, and gave her a letter of introduction to his friend, Stacy, who had a co-op off Union Square. She felt, with her uncle's help and teaching jobs, she could get along for few years until she got established as an artist, but after little more than a year, her money was running out. Commuting costs, co-op fees, supplies, even the minimal rent were wearing down the money.

Her uncle, on the other hand is wealthy and could easily afford to keep her. It is just her aunt and her women cousins' jealousy that put a snag in the works.

Janine tries to put these concerns out of her mind. She spends the rest of the morning completing a large section of work and finishes by blowing out the waxes with a heat gun into a smooth, glossy surface. The melted paraffin adds a rich depth of aromas to the linseed and turpentine already making up the brew. She considers briefly the hazardous air she is breathing. She recalls the young woman she knew in art school who melted dry cleaner bags into torsos and animal figures and used spray paint to color them. She died of lung cancer when she was thirty-five. Janine considered her a middle aged woman at the time, but now, recalling this at age twenty-seven, thirty-five didn't seem that far off. Her teachers warned their students to wear masks and work in well ventilated spaces. Well, that was one luxury Janine could not afford. All professions have their dangers, she thinks, and shrugs off any worry.

She looks up and is surprised to see it is after noon. She has to get to the school where she teaches a life drawing class from 1:00 to 6:00. She grabs a reel of slides and some other supplies and dashes to the train.

II.

The train station is just behind her uncle's offices and the destination station is a short block from the college. She structures her classes to begin with slides, usually of work which does a particularly good job capturing whatever concept she is covering that day: perspective, shadowing, negative space, etc. Next she demonstrates a painting technique, and finally the models come in at 3:00. She enjoys revealing the science of pigments and chemicals, an alchemist revealing her secrets to the eager adepts. What she doesn't like about teaching are the department meetings and the wine and cheese gatherings, chatting up the Dean. No, it isn't enough to be a good artist, a dedicated teacher. The world expects you to be the bold business woman and negotiate with galleries and collectors, too.

Promptly at three, the models for today's session walk in, and Janine recognizes them as the couple who came several times last fall. The woman was pregnant then, but now she carries her infant in a ratty blanket with the satin trimming half off and parts of the blanket no more than a rag. They are still as filthy as before. Rings of grime bracelet their ankles. Thin straps of leather serve as thongs on their feet against the New York winter. Wasn't a baby supposed to make people cleaner? Janine thinks. She has never painted homeless people before (at least she assumes they are). She sets the two in a big throne-like chair with lion paws on the arms. The man holds a staff with a ball on top. He stands proudly, his arm around his woman who stares off into some indeterminate space. The paintings she did before Christmas depict them as perhaps Mary and Joseph, homeless, looking for a place to have their baby but finding no one to take them in. They were beautiful to paint, the woman with her full pregnant belly and ripe breasts, the man a gangly angular counterpoint. She did washes in sepia and over-layered them with thin veneers of subtle color in pastels and gouache. Janine's washes glow as from a secret pool of crystal. She once received critical praise in a review in the *Los Angeles Times* for one of her figurative pieces.

On the way home on the train, Janine cannot stop wondering about the family. Where do they live, where do they go after these sessions? Where do they eat, sleep? Was there anyone to bail them out in times of trouble?

Janine had been that person for her older, mentally retarded sister. By age 38 her sister, Donna, had not developed normally and had the mental age of a four-year-old. She had lived her whole life with their father in Silverado Canyon. About six years ago, their father started dating again after years of living without a mate. Janine's mother had died in a car accident when Janine was small. Their father, Jeremy, wanted to marry again, and the new wife, with a couple of young daughters of her own, wanted nothing to do with Donna. Janine, living in an industrial space in East L.A., was in no position to take Donna in. She was shocked that her father could just turn his older daughter out, although he did have Donna evaluated and placed in a supervised group home. Donna couldn't understand leaving her bedroom, the only home she had known, and Janine spent hours trying to get Donna to understand that, yes, sometimes people lose their homes.

During that time Donna was in the home, Janine got a call every four months or so from the home supervisor saying Donna was

missing and had been gone two days, sometimes three. Janine usually knew where to look: under a railroad overpass in downtown Santa Ana where homeless people congregated. Janine would buy Donna a meal and some cake for the residents and get her to promise not to run away again. The home supervisor pointed out to Janine that she was rewarding Donna by buying cake when she ran away, so Janine got in the habit of taking Donna to the bakery once a week and praising her for being good. Janine came to enjoy these visits and used the time to visit museums and other sites. Jeremy sometimes helped out, but it angered his wife, whom Janine started referring to as "that witch."

About three years ago, Janine got a call that Donna was missing, but she couldn't locate Donna in the usual spots. A week later, her body was found along the highway out toward Pomona. She must have been headed for home on Chino Hill. After that, Janine had very little to do with her father, didn't even inform him of her move until she realized she needed him to intercede with her uncle.

III.

Although it is almost seven when she gets home, her uncle is just locking up. She had hoped to avoid an encounter, expects him to put an end to their arrangement any day now. When had the pleasantries of their first encounters a year ago turned to feelings of resentment? she wonders as she approaches his car in the parking lot. She had almost thought she could live with this whole clan as a wayward stepchild, and they were friendly enough at first, inviting her to some backyard barbecues and such, but by this past Thanksgiving, there was no way she would sit at the Reilly table. Now, she chuckles to think she even considered wanting to be part of this messed up family.

"Hi, Uncle Reilly," she says.

"Hey, doll, good to see you. How's it going with your work?" What Janine feels he really means is, "Have you got any more teaching jobs, sold anything? And when are you leaving?" They have this conversation more and more frequently, but this time, he is direct. "Hon, this arrangement can't go on much longer. We need to store a shipment of televisions in the attic, and, well, my wife has an elderly aunt who needs an apartment." Janine doesn't stay to hear an ultimatum, but excuses herself saying she has to return her teaching materials to the studio.

Up in the studio, she lays out today's washes and compare them to the fall's. She can hear Marge's television downstairs. Ex-

cept for the TV's drone, all is quiet. It is her favorite time of day, knowing the Reillys have all gone home. She adds some touches to the large piece with colored chalks. In it, she has depicted a lifeless mannequin flopped over in the fetal position, lying on a vast, treeless plain. The ragged cloth mannequin, with a glint of sparkle in its eye, inspired her to paint it over and over. It is to this large piece that she affixes hornets as the supply comes her way. Satisfied that she has completed what she set out to do today, she turns out the lights and goes downstairs.

~Sandy Barresi

Happy Home

I walked up the path in the front yard and then climbed the stairs leading up to the porch. The house was done in white paneling. When I lived here, the house was enclosed in an imitation brick covering. I touched the front door. This was also different. It had changed from an old pine wood door, into a modern one cut from a manufactured Home Depot pattern.

I opened this newer door and walked inside.

There was no furniture; the family who had lived her previously was already long gone. The walls were different, so was the floor. Everything had metamorphosed from a Victorian antique styled house into a modern nightmare. The hardwood floors were covered up in wall-to-wall carpeting. The walls were painted a shade of tan probably named "Khaki". It paled in comparison from the gold floral printed wallpaper my mother had plastered it in when I was a child.

I walked out of the front hall and into the living room and its adjoining dining room. The French Doors were gone. So was the burgundy color the walls once were. Plastic mini blinds were on windows that I remembered covered in satin drapery.

A lump formed in my throat. The home I'd had as a child that my mother made so beautiful was completely gone. It had no soul.

In the kitchen the antique gas stove had been discarded for a new electric one with a digital clock and black shiny burners. I had longed for the stove to still be there. I learned to bake cookies in its oven, and to make eggs on its steel gas powered burners.

I looked out the window into the backyard. My swing set was long gone, and replaced with a swimming pool. All the pine trees that lined the borders of the yard had been cut down. A tall wooden fence stood there instead. There was a patio over where the vegetable garden was, and a walkway covered the graves of my long since deceased cats. Back in the house I was shaking. I knew it would have been different after fifteen years and four other owners, but not this different. I had hoped that the owner after us would have loved the old style of the house as much as my family had. Left the backyard in its natural beauty and the house looking like it was still of the era it was built in.

I turned and walked out to the front hall to find the stairs to go up.

I started to climb and realized that my hand was on a newer railing made of metal. I was terrified to see what had become of the second floor. When I got to the top, straight across from me was the room that had once belonged to my parents. The door was ajar. It only took a small nudge for it to swing open. It was stark, white. Lifeless.

I went to the next room, one I had shared with my sister until I was too old to share with her anymore. When we had it, it was painted pale pink and had a wallpaper border half way up with unicorns on it. We slept on antique beds that had been our mother's and aunt's when they were children. We even used the matching bureaus and nightstands that still existed from the set. It was all white with gold painted trim. It was popular in the seventies for girls' rooms. I know tons of people who have pieces from the set that had been passed on from their mothers as well.

The room was like the one that had been my parents'; it was just white. White with a chocolate brown color on all the woodwork. I found the same thing in what used to be my brother's room. Its Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle wallpaper had been ripped down.

In the corner of my brother's old room, there was a door. The door that led up to the attic floor, that was my bedroom after my parents split my sister and me up. I had a whole open floor of the house to myself. I had put red drapes on the windows and painted the walls deep purple. I had put posters of all the rock bands I began to love on the walls with scotch tape. My bed was covered in a purple and red afghan to match that was knitted by my great grandmother. On the woodwork surrounding the windows, I had put all kinds of obnoxious stickers. Some had band logos; others had just been silly sayings like "I'm not weird, I'm gifted" and "Hi, Loser."

My bookshelves were filled with Anne Rice and Tolkein. My CD tower with Garbage, Nirvana and Green Day. My father taught me to play the guitar in that room.

I learned to use watercolor paints and charcoal pencils in that room.

I got suspended from school for violent behavior and got punished to that room.

I got my first kiss in that room.

I held my breath and opened the door. The stairs were still wooden, and the walls were still dark in color. I couldn't tell if it was purple still, the lights were turned off. When I got to the top, I switched on the lights.

The people who lived here had definitely just used this room as attic space. The walls were still my shade of violet, with chipped areas where I had ripped posters down from when we moved. I looked at the windows, and tears came to my eyes. Stickers still scarred the windowsills. I read off all the silly things they said, remembered all those rock bands from the nineties. On the wall to my right there was a dent from when my guitar went flying from my arms because the strap broke. I wound up having to have the neck realigned after that.

I made the decision right there and money was no object. I called up my real estate agent and made an offer on the house. If any one topped mine off, I would top theirs. If I had to threaten to break their kneecaps to get this house back I probably would.

I will crack open the cemented backyard, and till its soil. I'll buy vintage wallpapers and satin drapery. Find an antique gas stove.

After I returned the house to its former beauty I would move my mother in and out of her apartment. She would have her old room. I would have my old room with my husband. When my daughter is born, she will have the room I shared with my sister. I will cover it in unicorns. She will play on a swing set in the yard, and search for pinecones that fall from the pine trees I intend to replant.

I'll move my cat in here, and get a few more to keep her company. Put a doghouse back in the yard and get a baby black lab that will grow up to be just like the one my father raised when I was a child.

~Danielle Napier

Requiem

From Akhmatova
I learned that bitterness
is only something you keep
on the spice shelf
next to cardamom, cinnamon, and coriander.
I learned to embrace
it in the dark
fill myself with it
until a tender light came forth
and brought me peace.

~Anne Elezabeth Pluto



~Jen Lacroix

Contributor's Notes

Rachel Alschuler is 23 years old. She is an Arts major in her second to last semester at Lesley College. She is a photographer and printmaker, and a contributor to this magazine.

Sandy L. Barresi received a BA from Anna Maria College and a Master's in Education from Boston University. A painter and writer, her past positions include Instructor of Creative Writing, Fullerton Community College, and Executive Director, Literacy Volunteers, Bridgeport, CT. She was a workshop participant in the Lesley Seminar *Novel as Continued Process* taught by Laurie Foos since September 2004. She died this March after battling a long illness. *Washes* was her novel in progress.

Lauren Donohue is a Junior at Lesley University, majoring in Management. She is interested in writing, fashion and art. This is her first publication in *Commonthought*. Lauren is from Westboro, MA.

Jen Dubis, a graduate student of the M.Ed. Visual Art Program, resides in Lynn and is a freelance illustrator with a BFA in Illustration from the University of Hartford where she has had work published on campus. Her painting, *Backwards Beauty*, was chosen for the 2003 Society of Illustrators Student Competition where only 108 pieces were selected from over 4,500 nationwide series. Currently, she is getting ready to have her first book cover published (May 2005). If you would like to see examples of her work, please check out her website: www.jendubis.com.

Amy-Nicole DuFault is finishing her Junior year at Lesley, majoring in Middle School Education and English, hoping to also graduate with a minor in Drama. This is her first time contributing to the magazine, but she has always had a passion for writing, and is looking forward to writing more for years to come!

Deborah Fleur Milstein a GSASS student, is a writer, artist, astrologer, tarot reader, and teacher. See her website at www.beeflower.net.

Diane Huseby is a Senior at Lesley College, majoring in Secondary Education and English. She and her husband are expecting their first child in October.

Carly Israel "*There us no relationship as intimate as that between God and Self, but next to that fragile union is that of the poet and her poetry. At 25 I am honored to offer my heart and soul to be judged and reviewed by all of you. My life is beautiful and full of love, teachers, and courage.*"

Jen Lacroix is a graduate student in the Intercultural Relations Program.

Alison Mitchell is a Freshman Special Ed major at Lesley College, and was recently published in *Hanging Loose magazine*. She was the editor of her high school literary magazine for a couple of years, and is really happy to be in *Commonthought*!

David Morimoto is a naturalist and ecologist who studies conservation biology, habitat fragmentation and its effect on bird populations. He is doing research in southwestern Brazil in the Atlantic forest. He taught at Regis College for 14 years and is presently Director of Natural Science and Mathematics in the School of Undergraduate Studies.

Marc Morin is a Sophomore at the Art Institute of Boston at Lesley University majoring in Fine Arts and minoring in Art History. He's played the romantic male lead in the Oxford Street Players production of *The Rover* and *The Winter's Tale*.

Danielle Napier is a Sophomore at Lesley College majoring in English and minoring in God knows what. She likes chocolate, her cat and drinking way too much coffee.

Anne Elezabeth Pluto has been the faculty advisor for *Commonthought Magazine* since 1988. She is Associate Professor of Theatre and Literature at Lesley College and the Artistic Director of the Oxford Street Players of Lesley University.

Natalia Santiago is majoring in English and Secondary Education, and is interested in exploring the visual and literary arts. This is her first time participating in a creative writing class. She plans to continue to write and eventually begin to pursue publishing.

Crystal Grace Skeeters is a student in the Lesley program formerly known as ABC. She has been made aware that the name has changed, but says the acronym has not yet grown on her. She is designing her program of studies around the art of writing. This means she can honestly say that all of those hours spent writing in residence at various coffee shops and bars are actually advancing her toward a realistic goal. Her family and friends may or may not accept this assertion, but she will say it, nonetheless. She is most interested in the art and process of travel, particularly as it offers opportunity for learning hands-on how individuals, businesses, and governments relate (or fail to relate) in various societal constructs. She is not ashamed to admit she is a native Texan, though in these parts, she is quick to point to the fact that she moved out of the state a number of years ago. She has been an opera major, a communications major, and an education major in her previous college ventures, and hopes to combine all of her interests and passions into some sort of 'real' career before the age of fifty. She has recently considered marrying for money instead of searching for the ever-elusive thing the poets (and some lay-persons) call 'love.'

Elisabeth (Lis) Steinfeld is a graduating Senior with a major in English and a professional minor in Creative Writing. Her last internship was at *The Boston Phoenix* in the Erosphere Section.

Bernadette Stockwell is currently completing requirements for her

MFA in Creative Writing at Lesley University. She enjoys photography, sewing, music, eating ice cream and coaching her daughter's Destination Imagination team—State champions this year! She's been married to the same fabulous guy for almost 25 years. Her son Aaron, will attend Lesley in the fall.

Aurora Sunguroff is a Senior at Lesley College. She is a 23 year old English major with an IPM in Theatre, and plans to pursue a Master's in either Screenwriting or Psychology after she graduates from Lesley in the Fall. Her passions include reading good books, writing, stage acting, hip-hop dancing, ballet, traveling and playing with her dogs on the beach. Her strongest literary role models are her mother- Jenny Maas, her best friend since age three - Cami MacCardell, and authors Isabel Allende and Toni Morrison. These four women are the most talented courageous women on earth; all of them have been tremendous inspirations to her. Aurora wishes to dedicate *Phoenix Falling* to Cami - *"For obvious reasons, this is for you, more than it is for me or anyone else. Twenty years, too much to say, but you know... Always, A."*

Ashley Tripp is a SWF Communications major currently seeking Mr. Right Now to share her affinity for accessorizing and long walks on the beach while holding hands.

India Warner is a Junior at Lesley College, majoring in English. This has been her first experience working on a literary magazine, and she looks forward to contributing to *Commonthought* in the future.



